



THE BISHOP OF SODOR AND MAN'S

PAROCHIALIA:

OR,

INSTRUCTIONS

TO

THE CLERGY.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

RESEARCH REPORT

NO. 100

BY J. J. KILPATRICK

1955

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1955

PAROCHIALIA:

OR,

INSTRUCTIONS

TO

THE CLERGY,

IN THE

DISCHARGE

OF THEIR

PAROCHIAL DUTY.



BY THE

RIGHT REV. THOMAS WILSON, D.D.

Lord Bishop of Sodor and Man.

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY T. AND J. SWORDS,

No. 160 Pearl-Street.

1812.

TO THE DIRECTOR
OF THE FBI

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P R E F A C E.

THE venerable author of the following *Instructions to the Clergy*, presented a copy of them, in manuscript, to every Clergyman in his Diocese; and as they are admirably adapted to the end for which they were designed, we may reasonably presume that this instance of his Lordship's affectionate concern for his Clergy and people was attended with the happiest effects.

By reprinting these *Instructions* in the present form, the same beneficial consequences will, we hope, be greatly extended and multiplied; as every Clergyman will now have it in his power to procure so excellent a *Vade Mecum*, at a small expense.

The *Instructions* comprehend several of the most important branches of the Pastoral office; and as they are the fruit of long experience in the work of the Ministry, and that too the experience of Bishop WILSON, they carry their own recommendation with them, and will, we doubt not, be favourably received by the reverend body, for whose use they are intended, and to whom they are most respectfully offered.

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TO THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE
OF SODOR AND MAN.

Bishop's Court, March 3, 1708.

MY DEAR BRETHREN,

I PERSUADE myself, that you will take the following advice well from me, because, besides the authority God has given me, I have always encouraged you to give me your assistance to enable me to discharge my duty.

Every return of Lent (a time when people were wont either to call themselves, or to be called to an account) should put *us*, above all men, upon examining and judging ourselves, because we are to answer for the faith and manners of others, as well as for our own; and therefore this is a very proper season to take an account both of our flocks and of ourselves, which would make our great account less hazardous and dreadful.

Let me therefore intreat you, at this time, to do what I always have obliged myself to; namely, carefully to look over your ordination vows. It is very commendable to do this every Ember-week, but it would be unpar-

B

donable negligence not once a year to consider what we have bound ourselves to, and taken the Sacrament upon it.

In the first place, therefore, *If we were indeed moved by the Holy Ghost, and truly called to the ministry of the Church*, as we declared we were, this will appear in our conduct ever since. Let us then consider, whether our great aim has been to promote the glory of God with which we were intrusted, and the eternal interest of the souls committed to our charge, according to the vows that are upon us? If not, for God's sake let us put on resolutions of better obedience for the time to come.

The Holy Scriptures are the rule by which we and our people are to be judged at the last day; it is for this we solemnly promise, *To be diligent in reading, and to instruct our people out of the same Holy Scriptures. They do indeed sufficiently contain all doctrine necessary to eternal salvation*, (as we profess to believe) but then they must be carefully studied, often consulted, and the Holy Spirit often applied to for the true understanding of them; or else in vain is all our labour, and we are false to our vows.

Upon which heads it will behove us to con-

sider, How much we have neglected this necessary study ;—how often we have contented ourselves with reading just so much as we were obliged to by the public offices of the Church !—How apt such as read not the Holy Scriptures are to run to other books for matter for their sermons ; by which means they have been too often led to speak of errors and vices which did no way concern their hearers, or of things above their capacities :—And it has often happened, that they themselves have scarce been convinced of (and of course have not been heartily in love with) the truths which they have recommended to others, which is the true reason why their sermons may have done so little good.

But when a man is sensibly affected with the value of souls, with the danger they are in, with the manner of their redemption, and the price paid for them ; and is well acquainted with the New Testament, in which all this is plainly set forth ;—as he will never want matter for the best sermons, so he will never want arguments sufficient to convince his hearers, his own heart being touched with the importance of the subject. Under this head, we must not forget to charge ourselves with the neglect of catechising ; for, as it is one of the

most necessary duties of the ministry, so it is bound upon us by laws, canons, rubrics, and constitutions, enough to awaken the most careless among us to a more diligent discharge of this duty.

But though we should be never so diligent in these duties, if our conversation be not edifying, we shall only bring these ordinances into contempt; and therefore, when a priest is ordained, he promises, *by God's help, to frame and fashion himself and family, so as to make both, as much as in him lieth, wholesome examples and patterns of the flock of Christ.*

Under which head, it will be fit to consider, what offence we may have given, by an unwary conversation, by criminal liberties, &c. that we may beg God's pardon, and make some amends by a more strict behaviour for the future; that we may be examples to the flock, teaching them sobriety, by our strict temperance; charity, by our readiness to forgive; devotion, by our ardent zeal in the offering up their prayers to God.

They that think all their work is done, when the service of the Lord's day is over, do not remember, that they have promised to use both public and private monitions, as well to

the sick as to the whole, within their cure, as need shall require, and as occasion shall be given. Upon this head, let us look back and see, how often we have forborne to reprove open offenders, either out of fear, or from a sinful modesty, or for worldly respects:—Considerations which should never come in competition with the honour of God, with which a clergyman stands charged.

Let us consider, how few we have admonished privately; how few we have reclaimed; and how many, who are yet under the power of a sinful life, which we might have reclaimed by such admonitions!

Let us consider, how many have been in affliction of mind, body, or estate, without any benefit to their souls, for want of being made sensible of the hand, and voice, and design of God in such visitation! How many have recovered from the bed of sickness, without becoming better men, only for want of being put in mind of the fears they were under, and the thoughts they had, and the promises they made, when they were in danger!—Lastly, how many have lived and died in sin, without making their peace with God, or satisfaction and restitution to man, for want of being forewarned of the account

they were to give. A negligence which we cannot reflect upon without trembling.

It will here likewise be proper to consider, how many offenders have escaped the censures of the Church through our neglect, by which they might have been humbled for their sins, and others restrained from falling into the like miscarriages.—Other Churches lament the want of that discipline, which we (blessed be God) can exercise. How great then is the sin of those, who, by laziness or partiality, would bring it into disuse!

Because a great deal depends upon the manner of our performing divine offices, we ought to reflect upon it, how often we read the prayers of the Church with coldness and indevotion, and administer the Sacraments with an indifference unworthy of the holy mysteries; by which it comes to pass, that some despise, and some abhor the service of God! Let us detest such indevotion, and resolve upon a becoming seriousness, when we offer up the supplications of the people to God, that they, seeing our zeal, may be persuaded, that it is not for trifles we pray, nor out of custom only that we go to Church.

The great secret of attaining such an affecting way, is to be constant and serious in

our private devotions, which will beget in us a spirit of piety, able to influence our voice and actions.

Having thus taken an account of our own engagements, and heartily begged God's pardon for our omissions, and prescribed rules to ourselves, of acting suitably to our high calling for the future, we shall be better disposed to take an account of our flock: always remembering, that our love to Christ is to be expressed by feeding his sheep.

I have observed with satisfaction that most people, who by their age are qualified, do come to the Lord's Supper at *Easter*. Now, it is much to be feared, that such as generally turn their backs upon that holy ordinance at other times, do come at this time more out of custom, or to comply with the laws, than out of a sense of duty.

This is no way to be prevented, but by giving them a true notion of this Holy Sacrament, such as shall neither encourage the profane to eat and drink their own damnation, nor discourage well-meaning people from receiving the greatest comfort and support of the Christian life.

To this end it will be highly conducive, (and I earnestly recommend it to you) to make

this the subject of a good part of your sermons during Lent. But let them be plain and practical discourses, such as may set forth the nature, end, and benefits of the Lord's Supper. That it is to keep up the remembrance of the sacrifice and death of Christ, whereby alone we obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion. That it is a mark of our being members of Christ's Church, a token of our being in covenant with God. That a sinner has nothing but this to plead for pardon, when the devil or his conscience accuse him before God. That we ought to receive as often as conveniently we can, that, as Peter Damien expresses himself, "the old serpent, seeing the blood of the lamb upon our lips, may tremble to approach us." That Jesus Christ presents before God in heaven his death and merits, for all such as duly remember them on earth.

Let them know, that a Christian life is the best preparation;—that God respects sincerity of heart above all things; which consists in doing what God has commanded us, to the best of our knowledge and power.

Let them know the danger of unworthy receiving, without full purposes of amendment of life. And, that they may know wherein

they have offended, and that they may have no cloak for their sin, it would be very convenient, some Sunday before Easter, to read to them some heads of self-examination, (leaving out such sins and duties in which none of them are concerned) such as you will find at the latter end of the *Whole Duty of Man*, and in many other books of devotion.

But to make your sermons more effectual, (and I desire it and require it of you) that you take an account of the state and condition of your particular flocks, during the approaching season, and visit and deal in private with those upon whom your sermons have probably had no influence.

Let them know, that the Church obliges you to deny them the blessed Sacrament, which is the means of salvation, until you can be satisfied of their reformation.

Let such as live in malice, envy, or in any other grievous crime, and yet come to the holy table as if they were in a state of salvation; let them be told, that they provoke God to plague them with his judgments.

Admonish such as are litigious and vex their neighbours without cause, that this is contrary to the spirit and rules of Christianity;

—that this Holy Sacrament either finds or makes all communicants of one heart and mind, or mightily increases their guilt that are not made so.

Tell such as are wont, before that solemn season of receiving, to forbear drinking and their other vices,—that fast and pray for a few days;—tell them plainly, that none of these exercises are acceptable to God, which are not attended with amendment of life.

Rebuke severely such as despise and profane the Lord's day; make them sensible, that a curse must be upon that family, out of which none goes to Church to obtain a blessing upon those that stay at home.

Tell such as have submitted to Church censures, and are not become better men, how abominable that hypocrisy is, that made them utter the most solemn promises, which they never meant to keep.

By this method, you will answer the ends of that Rubrick before the Communion, which requires all persons that design to receive to signify their names to the Curate at least some time the day before,—an order, which, if observed, would give us rare opportunities of admonishing offenders who yet do not think themselves in danger.

Lastly ; in making this visitation, you will see what children are uncatechised, what families have no face of religion in them, &c.

But for God's sake remember, that if all this is not done in the spirit of meekness, with prudence and sweetness, you will never attain the end proposed by such a visitation of your parish.

Do but consider, with what goodness our Blessed Master treated with sinners, and you will bear much in order to reduce them. At the same time, fear not the face of any man, while you are engaged in the cause of God, and in the way of your duty. He will either defend you, or reward your sufferings ; and can, when he pleases, terrify gainsayers.

It is true, all this is not to be done without trouble ; but then consider, what grief, and weariness, and contempt, our Master underwent, in turning sinners from the power of satan unto God : And as he saw the travail of his soul, so shall we reap very great benefit by it even in this world.

We shall have great satisfaction in seeing our Churches thronged with communicants, who come out of a sense of duty more than out of a blind obedience. We shall gain a wonderful authority amongst our people—

Such as have any spark of grace will love and respect you for your friendly admonition. Such as have none, will however reverence you, and stand in awe of you. And they that pay you tythes, will by this be convinced, that it is not for doing nothing that you receive them, since your calling obliges you to continual labour and thoughts of heart.

That you may do all this with a spirit of piety worthy of the Priesthood, you have two excellent books in your hands, *The Pastoral Care*, and *The Country Parson*, which I hope I need not enjoin you to read over at this time.

I considered, that the best men have sometimes need of being stirred up, that they may not lose a spirit of piety which is but too apt to languish. This is all the apology I shall make for this address to you at this time.

Now that both you and I may give a comfortable account of our office and charge, as it is the design of this letter, so it shall be my hearty prayer to God.

I am,

Your affectionate Brother,

THOMAS SODOR AND MAN.

PAROCHIALIA.



OF CONFIRMATION.

Of answering the Ends of this Apostolical Institution.

THERE is no question to be made of it, but that most of that ignorance, impiety, profaneness, want of charity, of union, and order, which we complain of, is owing to the neglect or abuse of this one ordinance; which being appointed by the Apostles, and practised even when baptism was administered to people of full age,* it is no wonder that God punishes the contempt of it, by withholding his Holy Spirit, and those graces which are necessary, and would certainly accompany the religious use of it.

If this were well considered, and Pastors

* Acts viii. 17.

would resolve to discharge their duty in this particular faithfully, we should soon see another face of religion: Christians would be obliged to study their religion, and to think it something more than a work of the lips, and of the memory, or the mere custom of the place where they live. And being made sensible of their danger, (being liable to *sin*, to *death*, and to *damnation*) this would make them *serious*, and *thoughtful*, and *inquisitive*, after the manner of their redemption, and the means of salvation; and their consciences being awakened and informed, sin would become more uneasy to them, and virtue more acceptable. In short, by this means, people would know their duty, the sacraments would be kept from being profaned, and Pastors would be respected and obeyed, as being very truly the fathers of their flock.

And certainly no greater injury can be done to religion, than to suffer young people to come to confirmation before they know the reason of this service, and have been well instructed in the principles and duties of Christianity. This being the very time of seasoning their minds with sound knowledge, of fortifying their wills with sober resolutions, and of engaging them to piety, before sin has

got the possession of their affections ; this being also the time of qualifying them to receive benefit by all our future labours, and of arming them against apostacy, heresy, schism, and all other vices to which we are subject in this state of trial.

In short, I do not know how a Clergyman could possibly spend one month better, than by leading young people, as it were, by the hand, into the design of Christianity, by some such easy method as this following : which, if deliberately proposed to every single person in the hearing of all the rest, (who should be obliged to be every day present) and familiarly explained, not the most ignorant (supposing he had learned, as he ought, the Church Catechism) but would be able to give a reason of the hope that is in him ; and his faith being thus built upon a solid and sure foundation, would, by the grace of God now imparted to him in a greater measure, withstand all future trials and temptations.

*The Method of dealing with young Christians,
in order to fit them for Confirmation.*

I do not ask you, whether you believe in God : you cannot open your eyes, but you

must, by the world that you see, acknowledge the God that made it, and does still preserve it; that he is infinite in power, in wisdom, and in goodness; that in him we live, and move, and have our being; that he is therefore worthy of all the love and service that we can possibly pay him.

How then do you think it comes to pass, that so many, who profess to know God, do yet in their works deny him? * Why; this shows plainly, that man is fallen from that good estate in which God created him. He knows that he ought to live righteously, as in the sight of an holy and just God; that he should be afraid of doing any thing to offend so powerful a Being; that he should love, and strive to please him, upon whose goodness he depends; and that he should obey all his laws. And yet he cannot prevail with himself to do what he is persuaded he ought to do.

This may convince you, that man's nature has been sadly corrupted some way or other; we having, in every one of us, the seeds of all manner of wickedness, which, if not kept under, will certainly grow up and be our ruin.

* Titus i. 16.

Now, the Holy Scriptures tell you how this came to pass; namely, that our first parents being created perfect, (that is, able to know and obey any law that God should give them) God gave them the law of nature and right reason to live by, and required of them a perfect obedience, with this assurance, that they should never die, if they did not transgress one particular command—of not eating the forbidden fruit; which command was given them both to try their obedience, and to keep their appetites in subjection.

Now, they did transgress this command, and thereby became subject to sin, to death—the reward of sin, and to the wrath of God: for God withdrew the supernatural powers and graces which he had given them, so that now, though they knew what was fit to be done, yet had they no longer power to perform it; which would certainly have driven them to despair, but that God was pleased immediately to comfort them with this promise, That a time was coming, when he would send one to redeem them and their posterity from this miserable bondage; and that he would then receive them again into favour, upon reasonable conditions.

In the mean time, Adam begat a race of

children after his own likeness;* that is, with such a corrupt nature as his own was now become; and his posterity grew every day more and more wicked, till at last God destroyed the whole world (except eight persons) by a flood.

But this did not destroy the seeds of sin which was in them, for by these eight persons the world was peopled with a race of men, who in a short time did quite forget and forsake God; and for the most part became the subjects of the devil, and were led captives by him at his will.

At last, God remembered his promise, and resolving to mend that disorder which sin had caused in the world, he sent his Son to take our nature upon him, and to give mankind assurance, that God would be reconciled to them upon very merciful conditions; namely, if they would renounce the devil, who first tempted man to sin, and accept of such laws and rules as were necessary to change their nature, which was now become prone to evil continually.

Now, to assure them that Jesus Christ came with this message from God, he did such

* Gen. v. 3.

miracles as none but God could do; and to convince us how much he loved us, and what a sad thing sin is, (which nothing but his death could atone for) he gave his life a ransom for us; the punishment due to *us* being laid on *him*.

And God, to let us know that he was well pleased with what his Son had *done*, and *taught*, and *suffered*, raised him to life after he had been crucified, and received him up into heaven, and gave him all power in heaven and in earth, and sent down the Holy Ghost, with mighty power, to set up his kingdom, which is his Church, among men; to destroy the kingdom of satan, who hitherto had ruled without control; and to free mankind from the tyranny and slavery of sin.

In order to this, the Holy Ghost appointed certain persons, (who are called Christ's ministers) and gave them power to receive into his Church all such as would promise to obey his laws.

Your parents, therefore, took care (as the Jews did by their children) to consecrate you to God and Christ as soon as you were born. And this they did by baptism, (as Jesus Christ had commanded) by which holy ceremony you were dedicated to *God*, who *made* you;

to *Jesus Christ*, who *redeemed* you; and to the *Holy Ghost*, who *sanctifieth* all God's chosen servants.

Thus you were translated (or taken) out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom, protection and government of *Jesus Christ*.* And being thus received into Christ's Church, you became a child of God, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven.

But then you are to consider, that before you were admitted to this favour, your sureties promised for you, that when you should come to age, you should in your own person, and with your own free consent, renounce the devil and all his works, the world and all its wicked customs, and the flesh with all its sinful lusts:—that you should believe in God, that is, receive the gospel as a rule of faith; and obediently keep God's commandments.

You are now, therefore, called upon to do this, before God, who knows all the secrets of your hearts; before God's minister, who will charge you very solemnly to be sincere; and before the congregation, who will be witnesses against you if you shall break your vows.

* Col. i. 13.

I must tell you farther, that to root or keep out evil habits, and to get habits of virtue, and to live as becomes a Christian, is not so easily done as promised.

You will be obliged to take pains, to watch and pray, and deny yourself, and even lay down your life, rather than deny your profession, or dissemble it.

But then you will not think this too much, when you consider, that it is for your life, and that it is to escape eternal death.

For Jesus Christ has made known to us, that this life is a state of trial, and only a passage to another life, where God will take an account how all men have behaved themselves here, and appoint them a portion suitable to what they have done in the body, whether good or bad: *When they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting misery.*

Now, that you may not despair of going through the work of your salvation, and getting the victory over all your enemies, Jesus Christ hath sent down his Holy Spirit to be communicated, *by the laying on of hands*,* to all such as are disposed to receive him; by

* Acts viii. 17.

which Almighty Spirit all your enemies shall be subdued, all your lusts mortified, your corruptions rooted out, and your soul purified; so that when you die you will be fit to be carried to the quiet and happy regions of paradise, where the souls of the faithful enjoy perpetual rest and happiness.

Every Christian who is preparing himself for confirmation, ought to have this or some such short account of the method of divine grace read to him distinctly (and explained where there is need) once every day for one month, at least, before that holy ordinance; that he may remember it as long as he lives, and be able to give a reason of the hope that is in him.

But, forasmuch as he is to renew his vows before God, who will be provoked with the hypocrisy and impiety of those who promise what they do not understand, or what they do not think of performing, a good pastor will not fail to ask every person, in the presence of the rest, (that by hearing them often they may be better able to remember them) some such questions as these following.

Of Renouncing the Devil, &c.

Are you convinced that you ought to love God, as he is the author of all good, and *upon whom you depend for life, and breath, and all things?*

Why then consider, that you cannot possibly love God, unless you renounce the love of every thing that may displease him?

Do you know that all sin is displeasing to God, as being the transgression of his law?*

Do you therefore renounce all sin, and every thing that would draw you from God?

Do you renounce the *devil*, the great enemy of God and man; all his *works*, such as pride, malice, revenge, and lying; and wicked men, which are his agents?

Do you know that this is not the world you were made for—that it is only a passage to another?

Do you then renounce the *world*; that is, all evil customs, all that is wicked or vain, all covetous desires, and inordinate love of riches, or pleasures, or honours, which are the world's idols, and draw the heart from the love of God?

* 1 John iii. 4.

Will you renounce and abhor all *youthful lusts*, all sins of *impurity and uncleanness*, and all sins which lead to these; such as *gluttony* and *drunkenness*, *filthy words* and *songs*, *intemperance*, and *an idle life*?

Do you know that it is a very hard thing to break off evil habits?

Will you then call yourself often to an account, that you may repent and amend, before sin and hell get dominion over you?

Will you be careful to avoid all temptations, and occasions of sin, and especially of such sins as you are most apt to fall into?

Will you keep a strict watch over your heart, remembering that adulteries, murders, thefts, and all manner of wickedness, proceed from thence?

Since heaven and happiness eternal are blessings too great to be attained without labour and pains, will you resolve in earnest to enter in at the strait gate, cost what trouble it will?

Will you be temperate in all things, deny yourself, and use such abstinence, as the flesh being subdued to the spirit, you may in all things obey all godly motions?

Are you convinced, that the power to do good is from God?

Will you then pray to God daily, that his

Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule your heart?

And will you take care to remember this great rule of the Gospel,—that he that makes use of God's grace, he shall have still more grace; and he that neglects it, shall lose what he hath?

Of Faith in God, in Jesus Christ, &c.

You know it is your duty to *believe in* and to *love God*.

That you may do so truly, you must often think of God as the author and fountain of all good; you must pray to him, give him thanks, and always speak of him with great reverence.

Will you resolve to do so?

And if you set God always before you, and remember that he hates all iniquity, that he sees all you *do*, or *speak*, or *think*, this will fill your heart with godly fear.

Are you persuaded, that nothing does happen in the world without God's knowledge and permission?

Will you then trust in the Lord with all your

heart, and rest assured that neither men nor devils can hurt you without his leave?

Will you consider afflictions as coming from the hands of a good God, and therefore to be borne, with *patience, submission*, and a firm faith *that all things work together for good to those that fear God?*

The Holy Scripture, as well as sad experience, assures us, that our nature is corrupt, and prone to evil continually. Are you truly sensible of this?

If you are, then you know for certain, that you are liable to the wrath of God, and that there is a necessity of a Redeemer to make your peace with God, and to show you how to please him.

Know then, that it was for this reason that the Son of God took our nature upon him, that he might suffer what we had deserved to suffer, and that God laid on him the iniquities of us all, and that he hath obtained everlasting redemption for all them that obey him.

Are you then persuaded, that such as do not lay hold of this mercy must suffer the wrath of God in their own persons?

Are you then resolved to fly to God's mercy, for Christ's sake, to obey his laws, and follow his example?

Will you always endeavour to do what you believe Christ would do, if he were in your place and circumstances?

Will you set before your eyes his *sufferings*, his *humility*, his *patience*, his *charity*, and his *submission* to the will of God, in order to *direct*, to *support* and *comfort* you in all your troubles?

And remember that Jesus Christ is now in heaven, in his human nature, evermore interceding for all that go to God by him.

Do you firmly believe all that God hath made known to us by his Son?

Do you believe that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, by whose righteous sentence, they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting misery?

Will you then live like one that believes all this; being careful of all your thoughts, words, and actions, which must then be judged?

Do you know that in baptism we are dedicated to the Holy Ghost, because it is he who must sanctify our nature, and fit us by his graces for heaven?

Will you then pray earnestly to God, and especially at this time, to give you this bless-

ing, since he himself hath promised *to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

Will you order your life according to that word which he inspired, and take care not to grieve him by continuing in any known sin?

And since you are taught and governed by a Bishop and Pastors commissioned by the Holy Ghost,* will you therefore live in obedience to them, to whom Jesus Christ made this promise,† *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world?*

Will you treat all Christian people with love and charity, as being members of that body, of which Jesus Christ is the head?

Will you hope for forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake only, and believe that the goodness of God ought to lead you to repentance?

Do you believe that there will be a resurrection both of the just and unjust?

Do you faithfully believe, that after this life there will be a state of endless happiness or endless misery?

Remember then that *a saving faith purifieth the heart*; and that a good faith must be known by its fruits, as one tree is known from another.

* Acts xx. 28.

† Mat. xxviii. 20.

Of Obedience to God's Commands, &c.

Are you persuaded, that the design of all true religion is to make men holy, that they may be happy?

Do you think that man is able to find out a way to please God, and to govern himself by his own reason?

So far from it, that when God left men to themselves, (as he did the heathens) they chose the most foolish and abominable ways of serving their gods, and fell into wickednesses scarce fit to be named.*

Will you then make the law of God the rule of your life?

Will you be careful not to love or fear any thing more than God; for that would be your idol?

Will you worship God with reverence; that is, upon your knees, when you ask his pardon or blessing; standing up when you praise him, and by hearing his word with attention?

Will you honour God's name, so as not to use it but with seriousness?

Will you abhor all manner of oaths, except

* Rom. i.

when you are called before a magistrate ; and will you then speak the truth, as you hope the Lord will hold you guiltless ?

Will you remember to keep holy the Lord's day, as that which sanctifies the whole week ?

Will you honour your parents, and be subject to the higher powers, obeying all their lawful commands ?

Will you reverence your Pastors, and take in good part all their godly admonitions ?

Will you be careful not to hurt, or wish any man's death, not be glad at misfortunes, or grieve men without cause ?

Will you be gentle and easy to be entreated, that God for Christ's sake may be so towards you ?

Will you remember that whoredom and sins of impurity will certainly keep men out of heaven ?

Do you believe that restitution is a necessary duty, (where it can be made) without which there is no forgiveness ?

If you believe this, you will never wrong any body by force, fraud, or by colour of law ; you will pay all your just debts, and never take advantage of any man's necessity.

Will you remember that the God of truth hateth lying,—that the devil is the father

of lies,—and that liars, slanderers, and back-biters, are to have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone?*

Will you endeavour to be content with your own condition, neither envying that of others, nor bettering your own by unjust ways?

Will you in all your actions have an eye to God; and say to yourself, I do *this*, or forbear *that*, because God hath commanded me?

Will you remember this good rule, never to undertake any thing which you dare not pray God to prosper?

Are you convinced, that all power to do good is from God; and that without his grace, you cannot keep his commandments?

Will you then pray to God daily, that his Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule your heart?

May the gracious God enable you to do what you have now resolved upon.

You are now going to profess yourself a member of the Church of Christ.

Will you then endeavour to become a worthy member of that society?

Will you make the gospel of Christ your

* Rev. xxi. 8.

rule to walk by; and obey them that are over you in the Lord?

Will you promise by the grace of God, to continue in the unity of this Church, of which you are now going to be made a complete member?

If you should be so unhappy as hereafter to fall into any scandalous sin, will you patiently submit to be reformed by Godly discipline?

Will you be very careful, not to let wicked and profane people laugh you out of these holy purposes and resolutions, remembering the words of Jesus Christ; *He that denieth me, him will God deny?*

If this short method were conscientiously observed by every Curate of souls, for thirty or forty days before every Confirmation, and two or three hours every day spent in reading deliberately the short account of religion, and in asking every particular person the questions, in the hearing of all the rest, (which according to our constitution ought not to be above thirty or forty at one time). I will venture to say, that the remembrance of *this duty* would be of more comfort to a Pastor on his death-bed than *of all the rest of his labours*.

*A Prayer that may be used every Day during
the time of Instruction.*

O Lord, graciously behold these thy servants, who, according to the appointments of thy Church, are going to dedicate themselves to thee and to thy service.

Possess their hearts with such a lively sense of thy great mercy, in bringing them from the power of satan unto God;—in giving them an early right to thy covenant, and an early knowledge of their duty; that, with the full consent of their wills, they may devote themselves to thee; that so they may receive the fulness of thy grace, and be able to withstand the temptations of the *devil*, the *world*, and the *flesh*.

Continue them, O Lord, in the unity of thy Church, and grant that they may improve all the means of grace vouchsafed them in this Church, of which they are members.

Preserve in their minds a constant remembrance of that love, which they are going to renew before thee and thy Church.

That knowing they are the servants of the living God, they may walk as in thy sight, avoid all such things as are contrary to their

profession, and follow all such as are agreeable to the same.

O Lord, who hast made them thy children by adoption, bring them in thy good time to thine everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The Method of Instructing such as have been Confirmed, in order to prepare them for this Holy Ordinance.

IF Christians do frequently turn their backs upon this sacrament, and are not concerned to have it often administered, or seem little affected when they do partake of it, one may certainly conclude, *they never truly understood the meaning of it.*

This might surely, in some measure, be prevented, if due pains were taken to give young people a distinct knowledge of *this most important duty*; and of the manner of preparing themselves for it, before they should be admitted *the first time* to the Sacrament; for want of which very many continue in a gross ignorance both of the meaning and benefits of this ordinance all their days.

A good Pastor, therefore, will not suffer any one to come to the Holy Communion, until he has taken pains to examine and inform him very particularly concerning the *meaning* of this ordinance, and the *ends* for

which it was appointed;—what this Sacrament *obliges* Christians to, and the benefits they may expect from it;—with what *dispositions* a Christian should come to it, and the great sin of despising it.

The young Christian should, for instance, be put in mind, that as there was in the Jewish, so there is in the Christian Church, *two Sacraments*.

That the Sacrament of *Baptism* was ordained by Christ for admitting us into his Church upon certain conditions, which such as are baptized in their infancy are to perform when they come to age.

And the *Holy Supper* he ordained, that Christians might have an opportunity of renewing their baptismal vows, which they are but too apt to forget, and of making their peace with God, when they had broke his laws, and desire sincerely to return to their duty.

Now, as Jesus Christ did *by his death* make our peace with God, and obtain eternal redemption for all them that obey him, we Christians, in obedience to his command, do keep up the remembrance of his death until his coming again, after this *solemn manner*.

First. As God is the King of all the earth, we offer unto him the best things that the

earth affords for the life of man, namely, *Bread and Wine*, as an acknowledgment that all we have, whether for the support or comfort of our lives, is owing entirely to his bounty.

The bread and wine being placed upon the altar, (by which they are sanctified, that is, set apart for holy uses) we then proceed to give God thanks for his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, *who is the life of our souls*, after this manner:—

The Priest, by doing what Christ did, by *prayer and thanksgiving*, by breaking the bread and pouring out the wine, obtaineth of God that these creatures become, after a spiritual manner, the *body and blood of Christ*, by receiving of which our souls shall be strengthened and refreshed as our bodies are by bread and wine.

For all this is done to represent the death of Jesus Christ, and the mercies which he has obtained for us; to represent it not only to ourselves, but unto God the Father, that *as the prayers and alms of Cornelius are said to have gone up for a memorial before God*, so this service may be an argument with his Divine Majesty to remember his Son's death in *heaven*, as we do on *earth*, and for his sake to

blot out our sins, and to give us all an interest in his merits.

After this we all receive the bread and wine (being thus made the body and blood of Christ) in token of communion with Christ our head, and with all his members.

And that we may have a more lively sense imprinted upon our souls, of the *love* of God, of the *kindness* of our Redeemer, and of the *benefits* he has, by the shedding of his blood, obtained for us, the Minister of God applieth the merits of Christ's death to the soul of every faithful receiver, in these words: *Eat and drink this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and that he may preserve thy body and soul unto eternal life.*

By explaining the meaning of *this ordinance* after some such familiar way as this, a young Christian will see,

That by joining in this Sacrament, we keep up the remembrance of Christ's death, *which is our salvation:*

We plead with God for pardon, for *his Son's sake*, after a way which his Son himself appointed:

We are hereby more firmly united to Christ our head, and to the Church which is his body:

And, lastly, we do hereby express our faith and hope of his coming again to reward his faithful servants.

Now, these being duties of the greatest concern to Christians, it is no wonder, that the Church, directed by St. Paul, very seriously exhorts all Christians to examine and to prepare themselves for this Holy Ordinance; for if a Christian should presume to come to the Lord's table, without knowing what he is going to do, without *repentance*, without *purposes of leading a Christian life*, without *faith in God's mercy through Christ*, without a *thankful heart*, and without *charity*, he will receive a *curse* instead of a *blessing*.

Because many Christians, therefore, especially the younger sort, may not know upon what heads, and after what manner they ought to examine themselves, or lest they should do it by halves, or perhaps not at all, a faithful Pastor will show them the way, by examining them himself, after *this* or *some such like plain method*.

Concerning their Repentance.

Do you know that God will not accept of the service of such as live in the practice of any known sin?

Let me therefore advise you, as you love your soul, to consider seriously, whether you are subject to any evil habit, either of *lying*, or *swearing*, or *drinking*; or of any sin of *uncleanness*; or of an *idle life*, which will lead to these? And if you find you are, your duty is, to judge yourself, to beg God's pardon, and to amend your life.

Will you do this, and in *obedience to God*, because he requires it?

Will you promise sincerely to avoid all occasions of sin, especially of such sins as you have been most apt to fall into?

If through weakness or temptation you commit any sin, you will forthwith confess your fault to God, ask his pardon, and be more careful for the time to come?

Will you endeavour to live in the fear of God, always remembering, that a good life is the best preparation for this Sacrament?

Will you constantly pray for God's grace

and assistance, without which all your good purposes will come to nothing?

Will you strive to keep your conscience tender and awake, that you may know when you sin, and that your heart may not be hardened, which is the greatest judgment?

Lastly; will you be careful to keep a watch over yourself, that you may not fall into the sins you have repented of?

And will you often examine into the state of your soul, especially before you go to the Lord's table, that you may see whether you grow in grace, and get the mastery over your corruptions? For if you do so, you are certainly under the government of God's Holy Spirit.

*Concerning a Christian's Purposes of leading
a new, that is, a Christian Life.*

Do you sincerely purpose to make the law of God the rule of your life?

Will you do whatever you believe will please God, and avoid what you know or suspect will displease him?

Will you show that you believe, and fear,

and love God with all your heart, by being fearful of offending him, by giving him thanks for his mercies, and by praying to him daily for pardon, for grace, and for protection?

Will you have a great regard for every thing that belongs to God, his name, his house, his day, his ministers, and his word?

Will you be careful to attend the public worship of God, and especially upon the Lord's day, as you hope for God's blessing the whole week following?

Will you be sure to behave yourself reverently in God's house, not sitting at your ease when you should stand or kneel, lest your prayers become an abomination?

Will you reverence and obey your parents, your governors, and your betters, and especially such as are over you in the Lord?

Will you endeavour to live peaceably and charitably with all men, avoiding all malice, revenge, ill-will, and contention?

Will you be chaste, sober, and temperate, as becomes a member of Christ and his family, avoiding all excess in meat and drink, and an idle life, which are the occasions of sins not fit to be named amongst Christians?

Will you be true in all your dealings, avoiding all wrong, oppression, and extortion?

And will you remember, that without restitution, where it can be made, there is no acceptance with God?

Will you be careful to speak the truth, avoiding the sins of lying, of perjury, of tale-bearing, and meddling with matters which do not belong to you, as things hateful to God and man?

Will you be content with your lot, whatever it be; neither coveting what is another's, nor envying his prosperity, nor being glad at his calamities?

Lastly; will you do these things out of the love and reverence you bear to God, whose laws they are?

And will you seriously beg of him to write all these laws in your hearts, and to incline and enable you to keep them?

How a Christian should examine, whether he hath a lively Faith in God's Mercy through Christ.

As the blood of the **Paschal Lamb** sprinkled upon their doors, was that which saved the Israelites from death; so the blood of **Jesus Christ** is that which saves all **Christians** that partake of it.

Do you stedfastly believe this?

Do you trust in **Jesus Christ**, and in what he has done and suffered for you, and in him only, for pardon and salvation?

Do you firmly believe that **Jesus Christ** is now in heaven, interceding with God, by virtue of his death, for all such as on earth do religiously keep up the remembrance of that his death until his coming again?

Your faith being built upon the promises of God in **Jesus Christ**, and all his promises being on condition that we live as becomes **Christians**; will you seriously purpose to do so?

And will you remember, not to presume on God's mercy, or expect that he will communicate his graces, while you continue under the power of a sinful life?

How a Christian may know whether he has a thankful Remembrance of Christ's Death.

Do you desire to have a thankful remembrance of Christ's death?

Why then, consider what he has done for you and for all mankind, to recover us from a state of sin and misery.

We were all enemies to God by wicked works. Jesus Christ undertook to restore us again to God's favour. God therefore laid on him the iniquities of us all: for the sake of his death God was pleased to overlook the untowardliness of our nature, to forgive us our sins, to look upon us as his children, to give us all the grace and assistance which we shall want; and, if we behave ourselves like his children in this state of trial, he will for Christ's sake make us happy to all eternity when we die.

You see what reason we have to remember his death with thankful hearts.

Will you therefore keep these things in your heart, and show your thankfulness for the same, by living like one who has been redeemed from death and from damnation?

And will you be sure to remember this:

That Jesus Christ did indeed die to redeem us from death and hell? But then he must first redeem us from this present evil world, from our vain conversation, and from all iniquity; that is, he must make us holy, that we may be happy, for “without holiness no man can see the Lord.”

How a Christian may examine and know whether he is in Charity with all Men.

Our Lord Jesus Christ having by his death restored all mankind to the favour of God, he only expects this of us: That we should love one another as he loved us.

To this end, he hath appointed, that in this Sacrament we should all, as members of one family of which he is the master, as members of one body of which he is the head, that we should eat of one bread in remembrance of his death, and in token of that strict union which there ought to be amongst Christians.

Will you then walk in love as Christ hath loved us, and given himself for us?

Will you consider whether you have given any just occasion of offence, or injured any

body, so as that you ought to ask their pardon, and make them restitution?

And that no worldly shame may hinder you from doing so, you shall hear the very direction of Christ himself:—

Matt. v. 23, 24. If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Will you therefore desire forgiveness of all such as you have offended?

And do you forgive all that have offended you?

Can you heartily pray for every body; and will you do so?

Will you (as the Apostle directs) love, not in word only, but in deed and in truth, that is, doing good, as well as giving good words?

You will see Jesus Christ every day in some of his members; some naked, some hungry, some in affliction, some wanting comfort, others instruction: Will you, for his sake, be kind to them, according to their wants and your power to help them?

After this a good Pastor will let the young

Christian see the benefits of receiving as often as he has opportunity, and the great sin of turning his back upon this ordinance.

He will, for instance, put him in mind, that all Christians being obliged to examine themselves before they go to this Sacrament; this will keep them from falling into a state of sin and security.

That if we find we grow in grace, we shall have the greatest comfort; and if we have not got ground of our corruptions, this will make us more careful.

That our faith will hereby be strengthened, when we call to remembrance what Jesus Christ hath done for us, and that his love and his power are still the same if we strive to deserve his favour.

Lastly; that by duly partaking of this Holy Ordinance, we shall come to such a state, that it will be uneasy to us to offend God, and the very pleasure of our souls to obey his laws.

On the other hand, if a Christian turns his back upon this Sacrament, (without good cause) he transgresses an express command: *Do this in remembrance of me.* He shuts himself out of Christ's family; he lives without hopes, and without promises.

If, therefore, he ask how often he should receive this Sacrament, he ought to have an answer in the words of an ancient writer :
“ Receive it as often as you can, that the old
“ serpent, seeing the blood of the true Paschal
“ Lamb upon your lips, may tremble to approach you.”

And if to these instructions, a Pastor exhort the young Christian to be very careful not to separate from the Church, in unity with which he may expect the Holy Spirit, and all other benefits of Christ's passion; and if he likewise require him, at all times hereafter, before he designs to communicate, to give his Pastor an account of it, (in obedience to the orders of the Church) that he may receive further advice as there shall be occasion; he will have done a work worthy of a good Pastor, and will undoubtedly receive a good reward for so doing.

CONCERNING FAMILY PRAYER.

THE very learned and pious Bishop Pearson took occasion very often and publicly to bless God, that he was born and bred in a family in which God was worshipped daily. And certainly, it is a duty which entails very many blessings on posterity; for which reason, a Pastor should labour with all his might to introduce it into every family under his charge; at least, he should give neither himself nor his people any rest, till he has done all that lies in his power to effect so good a work; which if he does not do, this very intimation will one day rise up in judgment against him.

And in truth, this duty is so reasonable and advantageous, that a man, who will but set about it in good earnest, will find people less backward than at first he would imagine.

To acknowledge God to be the giver of all good gifts;—to put a man's *self*, his *wife*, his *children*, his *servants*, and all that belongs to him under God's protection;—to ask from him, as from a father, whatever we want, and to thank him for the favours we have received: These are duties which the reason of man-

kind closes with as soon as they are fairly proposed.

And then the advantages of family worship will be evident to the meanest capacities.

First. To begin and end the day with God, will be the likeliest way to make *servants* faithful, *children* dutiful, *wives* obedient, and *husbands* sober, loving, and careful; every one acting as in the sight of God.

Secondly. This will be a mighty check upon every one of the family, and will be a means of preventing much wickedness;—at least, people will sin with remorse, (which is much better than with a seared conscience) when every one knows he must go upon his knees before he sleeps.

Thirdly. This is the way to entail piety upon the generations to come: When children and servants, coming to have families of their own, cannot be easy till they fall into the same pious method which they have been long used to. *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it*; nor perhaps his children after him for many generations.

But if there are persons upon whom these motives make no impressions, let them

know the evil consequences of neglecting this duty:—

*That the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked.**

Pour out thine indignation, saith the Prophet,† (that is, God will do so) upon the families that call not upon his name.

Add to this, that *ignorance, profaneness,* and a *curse*, must of necessity be in that family where God is not owned; where, as one observes, not a creature but is taken care of, not a swine but shall be served twice a day, and God only is forgotten. I say, he must be worse than a heathen whom these considerations do not influence.

I know of no reason that can be offered, why every family in this diocese might not be brought to observe this duty, except this one: That very many cannot read, and are too old to learn the prayers provided for them; (though it would be well if all that can read did conscientiously discharge this duty.) Now, where this is indeed the case, I make no question, but that with half an hour's patience and pains, a Pastor might bring the most ignorant person to observe this following method of orderly devotion:

* Prov. iii. 33.

† Jer. x. 25.

First. Let him speak to his family and say,
Let us confess our sins to God, saying,

Remember not, Lord, our offences, nor
the offences of our forefathers; neither take
thou vengeance of our sins: spare us, good
Lord, spare thy people whom thou hast re-
deemed with thy most precious blood, and
be not angry with us for ever.

Then let him say to the family: Let us
praise God for all his mercies, saying,

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and
to the Holy Ghost;*

*As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever
shall be, world without end. Amen.*

Then let him say to the family: Let us
pray for God's blessing and protection, say-
ing,

Our Father, who art in Heaven, &c.

And then let him conclude the whole, say-
ing,

*The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and
the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the
Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.*

There is not one person but can say these
prayers already, and only wants to be put into
a method of saying them after this orderly
manner; and I am sure the comfort and bless-
ing of bringing all our people that cannot read

to this, would be unspeakably great both to them and to ourselves; and for the love of God, let it be attempted in good earnest.

AN ADMONITION PROPER FOR PARENTS.

MOST Parents are concerned for their children's present welfare, and too often renounce a good conscience rather than not provide for them; while few are careful to give them such instructions and examples as, by the grace of God, may secure them an eternal inheritance.

They should, therefore, be often put in mind of their duty in this particular, that they may not have the torment of seeing their children for ever ruined by their negligence.

It is a strange stupidity, and they should be told of it, for parents to be much concerned to have their children dedicated to God in baptism, and yet utterly unconcerned how they behave themselves afterwards.

The least that parents can do is, to instruct, or get their children instructed, in the princi-

ples of the Christian religion; to pray for them daily, and to see that they pray daily for themselves; to possess their minds with a love of goodness, and with an abhorrence of every thing that is wicked; and to take care that their natural corruption be not increased by evil examples.

It is a sad thing to see children under the very eye of their parents, and too often by their examples, getting habits of vanity, of idleness, of pride, of intemperance, of lying and pilfering, of tale-bearing, and often of uncleanness, and of many other sins which might be prevented by a Christian education.

Parents therefore should be made sensible of their great guilt, in suffering their children to take evil ways. They should be often told, that human nature being extremely corrupt, we need not be taught and be at pains to go to hell; we shall go thither of course, if we do not make resistance, and are not restrained by the grace of God, and our own care and endeavour.

They should know (however loth they are to hear it) that they are their children's worst enemies, when they will see no faults in them, —connive at what ought to be corrected,—

and are even pleased with what ought to be reprovèd.

He that spareth his rod, saith Solomon, hateth his son; that is, acts as if he really did so; but he that loveth his son, chasteneth him betimes; that is, before he grows headstrong, and before he is corrupted by evil habits. For a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.†*

In short, a parent, who has any conscience of his duty, will not suffer the least sin to go unreprovèd or without due correction; but then he will take the Apostle's advice,‡ *not to provoke their children to wrath*, by a causeless or too great severity; lest they be discouraged, and thereby their children's love, both for religion and for themselves, be lessened.

When children are grown up to years of discretion, parents should be admonished *to fit them for Confirmation*;—a privilege which both parents and children would very highly value, if they were made to understand the worth of it, which of all things a Pastor should take care to explain to them.

In the next place, it would be great charity for a Clergyman to interpose his good offices,

* Prov. xiii. 24.

† Prov. xxix. 15.

‡ Col. iii. 21.

(at least to offer his advice) when parents are about to dispose of their children in marriage, upon mere worldly considerations, and very often for little conveniencies of their own, without any regard to their children's future ease and welfare.

It is seldom that either parents or children pray for God's direction and blessing upon an undertaking which is to last as long as life; but run on headlong, as humour, or passion, or worldly interest, lead them, which is the true occasion of so many *indiscreet choices* and *unfortunate marriages*, which a Pastor should prevent as much as may be, by admonishing Christians of their duty in this particular, both publicly and in private conversation.

And when parents are providing for their children, let this consideration be always present with them, both for their own and their children's sake:—*Better is a little with righteousness, (that is, honestly gotten) than great revenues without right.**

When a curse goes along with a portion, it is often the ruin of the whole family. These were the remarkable words of the pious Judge Hales to his children:—"I leave you but little, but it will wear like iron."

* Prov. xvi. 8.

Lastly, a Pastor's advice would be very seasonable, and should be often repeated to such parents as are squandering away the inheritance which was left them by their forefathers, and left them *in trust only* for those that should come after them; depriving their children of their right, exposing them to hardships, to temptations, and to curse their memory:— Considerations which should make their hearts to ache, and force them to put an end to that idleness and intemperance, which are the occasion of so much sin and mischief.

INSTRUCTIONS PROPER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

IT is the great misfortune of *Youth*, that wanting *experience*, *judgment*, and very often *friends* capable of giving them good advice, and following the bent of their passions, they love and seek such company and pleasures as serve to strengthen their natural corruption, which, if not prevented by charitable advice, will be their ruin.

And certainly a Pastor has much to answer for, who does not lay hold of every occasion of showing young people their *danger* and their *duty*.

The first thing a youth should be made sensible of is this;—

That he has in himself the seeds of all manner of sin and wickedness, which will certainly spring up and be his ruin, if he does not watch against it, and pray daily for God's grace to preserve him from it:

That the wickedest man he knows was once as capable of salvation as he thinks himself to be; but by provoking God to leave him to himself, sin and hell have got the dominion over him:

And that, therefore, it is the greatest judgment that can fall upon any man, *to be left to himself.*

To come to particulars:—

First. Young people are apt to be *head-strong*, and *fond of their own ways*, and should therefore be told what God declares by Solomon: * *Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction; but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.—That there is a way that seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*

Secondly. They love idleness naturally, and therefore should be put in mind,—That slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; that is, makes men as careless of what will become of them as if they were fast asleep; and that drowsiness will cover a man with rags. Above all, they should be put in mind of our Lord's sentence, *Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.*

Thirdly. This being the age of *sensuality*, *libertinism*, and *vanity*; it must be a great grace, and very frequent instructions, that must secure young people from ruin.

They should therefore be often told,

* Prov. xiii. 8. xiv. 12.

That fools (and only fools) make a mock of sin; it being too dreadful a thing to be laughed at:

That whoredom and wine take away the heart; that is, make a man a mere brute:

That lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, and that *swearing* and *cursing* are sins easily learned, but hard to be left off, and will be punished most severely:

That *evil communications will corrupt good manners*:

That, therefore, young people should not, at their peril, run into unknown company and temptations, depending upon their own strength and good resolutions. They should be told,

That nobody is very wicked at once;—that there are few but had some time good notions, good purposes, and good hopes;—and those that are profligately wicked became so after this manner: They took delight in loose and wicked company; then they neglected to pray for grace; then they cast off the fear of God; then *holiness*; after that *modesty*; then care of reputation;—and so contracting evil habits, they became at last abandoned of God, and left to themselves.

Fourthly. A good Pastor will not forget to

exhort young people to flee youthful lusts, and all sins of impurity, filthy songs, and filthy stories, which leave cursed impressions upon the soul, do grieve God's Holy Spirit, which was given them at baptism and at confirmation, and provoke him to forsake them; and then an evil spirit most certainly will take them under his government.

Fifthly. Such as have parents should be exhorted to *love, honour, and obey* them,—that as the Apostle saith,* *It may be well with them, and that they may live long on the earth;*—that they may escape that curse pronounced, Deut. xxvii. 14. *Cursed is he that setteth light by his father and mother;*—and that of the wise man,† *The eye that mocketh his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out;* that is, such a one shall act in every thing he does as if he were blind.

In short, children, as they hope for God's favour and blessing, should strive to please their parents;—be grieved when they have angered them;—take their advice kindly, and follow it cheerfully;—and never marry without their consent, as they hope for happiness in that estate.

* Eph. vi. 1.

† Prov. xxx. 17.

Above all things,—young people should be obliged to observe the Lord's day:—They should be taught to reverence God's house, and God's ministers, who pray for them, and are to give an account of their souls.

They should be exhorted to pray daily for themselves, and against being led away by the violence of evil customs and the ways of the world, which they have renounced at their baptism.

And when they have run into errors (which they are but too apt to do) they should be made sensible of the ruin they are bringing upon themselves, that they may return to a better mind, and after the example of the prodigal in the gospel, beg God's pardon, and sin no more; being often forewarned, that God will, one time or other, *make them to possess the iniquities of their youth.**

* Job xiii. 26.

OF WORLDLY-MINDEDNESS.

A PASTOR will find that *worldly-mindedness* is one of the most universal diseases of his flock, and the most difficult to be cured.

People see an absolute necessity of taking care for themselves; and duty obliges them to provide for their families.

But then this care very often increases beyond necessity, and what was at first a duty becomes at last a sin; when Christians begin to set their hearts upon the world, to place their happiness in its favours, to dread its frowns, and to depend upon it as a good security against future evils.

Now, the consequence of such a love for the world will be, that many Christian duties must give place to worldly business; the very commands of God shall often be broken to gain worldly ends; men shall make a mere idol of the world; *love*, and *fear*, and *think*, and *depend upon* it, more than upon God, and will at last be so bewitched and blinded with it, that they shall not see the sin and vanity of all this, until the approach of death opens their eyes, and then they see the folly of their

choice, but see too, that it is too late to make a better.

In short, it is hard to live in the world and not love it; and nothing in nature can prevent or cure this disorder, but a sincere belief of the Gospel, and a resolute practice of the duties of Christianity.

For the Christian religion lets us know, that while we are in this world, we are in a state of banishment;—that here we have no abiding place;—that God has made our life short, on purpose that we may have no pretence to set our hearts on this world;—that it is a dreadful thing for a man to have his portion in this life;*—that a man's true happiness does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth;—and that God hath ordained that all things here shall be uncertain, and full of troubles, that we may be led more easily to set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth.

And for as much as it is found by sad experience, that the more men have, the more fond they will be of the world, Christians should be often advised to receive its favours with a trembling hand, and to remember, that

* Psalm xvii.

the more a man has, the more he must account for, the greater danger he is in, and the more pains he must take to preserve himself from ruin;—for it was not for nothing that our Lord said, *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

In short, there is no greater hindrance to piety than the love of the world: God therefore having made that and the care of our souls the great business of our lives, he has bound himself to take care of us, and that we shall want nothing that is necessary for this life. “Take no thought,” saith our Lord,* “for your life, what ye shall eat; nor for your body, what ye shall put on. Does not your Heavenly Father feed the fowls of the air? Does he not know that ye are better than they, and that ye have need of these things?”

Let not, therefore, Christians flatter themselves with the hopes that worldly business will excuse them from serving God; our Lord has already told us what sentence such people must expect:† *Not one of those men shall taste of my supper*; that is, those that were so taken up about their oxen, and their fields, and their worldly business, that they would not mind their Lord’s invitation.

* Matt. vi. 25.

† Luke xiv. 24.

And indeed our Lord tells us in another place,* that the very word of God will be lost on those whose hearts are full of the cares of this world, which choak the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

But then Christians have another way of deceiving themselves, and that is with the *hopes of reconciling a love for the world with the love of God.*

And yet our Lord Christ assures us, that they are as utterly inconsistent as light and darkness; that *no man can serve two masters*; and that whoever will be *a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

To conclude. All Christians are by their profession obliged *not to love the world.*

They are also obliged to use all proper means to prevent this love, which would otherwise ruin them.

Especially; they are obliged to great watchfulness and earnest prayers for God's grace to keep them from becoming slaves to the world;—from placing their confidence or happiness in it;—from taking delight in the possession of it;—from distracting cares about it;—from taking unjust ways to better or secure their

* Luke viii. 14.

portion in it;—from being extremely grieved at the loss of it, or unwilling to part with it when God so orders it;—from an hard heart, and a close hand, when the necessities of the poor call for it. And, lastly, from being diverted, by the hurry of this world, from the thoughts of the world to come.

For what will it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?
—*Remember Lot's Wife.*

ADVICE TO MEN OF ESTATES.

MEN of estates are but too apt to abuse the advantages they have above others, and they are unwilling to hear of it; they imagine they are above advice, and for that reason they are in most danger.

But whatever they fancy, a good Pastor will show them their danger and their duty, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

Now, such persons being subject to *idleness*, to *intemperance*, and to *bear hard* upon their poor neighbours, they should have prudent hints given them to avoid these sins which do so easily beset them.

That such, for instance, who have plenty without taking pains, may not contract an habit of idleness, which is the parent of infinite evils; (a man that has nothing to do being ready to do any thing that the devil shall tempt him to;)—a dislike to business;—a love of ease;—a dependance upon an estate more than upon God's providence;—running into company to pass away time;—a neglect of family duties;—an evil example to chil-

dren and servants;—an estate going to ruin for want of God's blessing and an honest care.

And though no man can call such a person to an account for leading an idle and a useless life, yet God often does do it; and hence it is we so often see families of an ancient standing broke, and estates crumble into pieces, because the owners thereof were above taking pains, and neglected to pray for God's blessing upon their estates and families.

It will be great charity therefore, however such people will take it, in a Pastor, to put them in mind,

That we are none of us *proprietors*, but only *stewards*; for the whole earth is the Lord's, and he disposes of it as he pleaseth:

That such as have received more than others, have more to account for:

That if they only seek to please themselves, they may justly fear the sentence of the rich man;* *Remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, for which thou art now tormented.*

That not only the wicked, but even the *unprofitable* servant, was cast into outer darkness:

* Luke xvi.

That if men have estates, they have greater opportunities of gaining God's favour, by doing good to others:

That if they have more time to spare, they have more time and more reason to serve God:

And if they feel not the afflictions of poverty, they are more obliged to assist and help them that do.

But if, instead of doing so, they consume their estates upon their lusts; and when having received more favours from God, they should be examples and encouragers of religion, they become themselves the greatest contemners of religion;—if their plenty makes them forget God, and their power more troublesome to their poor neighbours; then an estate is a curse and not a blessing.

In short, those that have estates should be charged, as the Apostle directs,* “*Not to be high-minded; not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God; that they do good; that they be rich in good works; ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*”

* 1 Tim. vi. 17.

They should be exhorted to give God thanks for his favours; to lay by a reasonable certain proportion of their incomes, to be bestowed in works of piety and charity; to be examples of industry, sobriety, and godliness, to their children, families, and neighbourhood.

CONCERNING THE POOR.

THE poor being God's peculiar care, they ought to have a great share in the concern of his ministers, to *relieve*, to *instruct*, and to *comfort* them.

For nature being averse to *contempt* and *sufferings*, which are often the lot of poor people, they are therefore too apt to charge God foolishly for the unequal distributions of his Providence; so that their minds must be satisfied, and their spirits supported, by such considerations as *these* :—

First. That Jesus Christ himself, though Lord of the whole creation, yet made it his choice to be born and to live in poverty; to convince the poor that that condition is not unhappy, if they do not make it so by their impatience.

Secondly. That there is no state whatever but has its proper difficulties and trials; and the *rich* especially, who are so much envied, are often forced to confess, that as our Lord has told us, a man's life and happiness consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.—And as to the next

world, the *poor* have much the advantage of the rich, in wanting so many temptations to the ruin of their souls;—and in the less account they have to make for what they have received. And then the poor (as an excellent poet expresses it)

—will bless their poverty, who had
No reckonings to make when they are dead.

Thirdly. They should be put in mind, that God has made poverty the lot of many of his dearest servants, fitting them for future and eternal happiness by the short afflictions of this life; weaning their affections from things temporal, and forcing them, as it were, to look for rest, and ease, and an inheritance elsewhere.

Fourthly. Let them therefore be often exhorted, *to put their trust in God, who is the helper of the friendless:*

To have much in their thoughts the joys of heaven, which will enable them, as it did our Lord himself, to bear with patience the hardships of their condition; not to envy such as are in better circumstances; nor to endeavour to better their own by unjust ways. But to believe assuredly, that if it is not their own fault, God will make them sufficient

amends in the next life for what he denied them in this.

Thus poor Lazarus no sooner expired, but he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, to enjoy perpetual rest and felicity.

Let them therefore be comforted with such Scriptures as these :

*Your heavenly Father knows what things ye have need of. Cast therefore all your care upon him, for he careth for you.**

Be content with such things as ye have, for God hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.†

Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith.‡

Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?§

But then they must be put in mind often to pray to God, to deliver them from the sins to which their poverty might tempt them.

Not to give themselves up to sloth and idleness, but to do what they well can for an honest livelihood ; to bring up their children in the fear of God, and to be sure not to set them

* 1 Peter v. 6.

‡ Prov. xv. 16.

† Heb. xiii. 5.

§ James ii. 5.

evil examples—of murmuring against God, of coveting what is another's, of filching and stealing: for if they should be guilty of any of these sins, they will lose all title to the promise of Jesus Christ: * *Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.*

And if to these exhortations a clergyman adds his alms, or procures the charity of such as are more able than himself, he will discharge a very material part of his duty, and he will have the prayers of those who have the freest access to the throne of grace.

* Luke vi. 20.

TO PERSONS IN AFFLICTION.

MAN, (as Job saith*) *being born to trouble*, a Pastor can hardly visit his flock, but he will meet with some who will want words of comfort; with which therefore he should be always furnished, both to *guide* and to *support* the spirits of the afflicted.

For Christians in affliction are but too apt to distract themselves, and increase their burthen, by considering only what flesh and blood suggest, not what faith and religion propose for their support and comfort.

They are too apt to charge God foolishly;—to be angry with those whom he has made or permitted to be the instruments of their affliction;—to grow dejected and melancholy upon the thoughts of the sins which they suppose have provoked God to visit them;—and, lastly, to despair of ever seeing an end to their sorrows.

Here then, the Pastor's help will be seasonable and charitable; for he will teach such as are in trouble to seek comfort in God, and in the aids of religion.

* Chap. v. 6.

He will convince them, (for instance)

That events are not left to chance, but that all things come to pass by the appointment or permission of God:

“ That the very hairs of our head are all numbered:”

That we are under God’s care, as well when he suffers us to be troubled, as when he smiles upon us:

That he is a very undutiful child, who will love and obey his father just as long as he pleaseth him, and no longer:

That God has a right to try whether Christians are sincere or not; that is, whether they will believe him to be their God and Father, as well when he corrects, as when he gives them their desires:

That we are in darkness, and do not ourselves know what would be best for us:

That God has made no earthly comforts *full* and *lasting*, on purpose that Christians, seeing the vanity of all worldly enjoyments, may not desire to set up their rest *here*, but be obliged to think of another life where all tears will be wiped away:

That God often punishes us in this world, that he may not be obliged to punish us hereafter:

That the best of men have need of being awakened into a sense of their duty and danger:

That a disciple of Jesus Christ must take part in the sufferings of his Lord and Master, as he hopes to be a partaker of his glory; *For if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.*

It is thus a Christian may be taught to submit to God's dispensations, and to make an advantage of what the world calls *misfortunes, afflictions, calamities, judgments.* And that instead of being *impatient, fretful, or dejected,* he should rather rejoice in *tribulation, in wrongs, in losses; in sufferings,* and be glad that he has a proper occasion of offering *his will* a sacrifice to the will of God, which is a most acceptable oblation.

When a Pastor has made his distressed patient sensible of the *reason* and *benefit* of *afflictions,* he will then proceed to show him how to quiet the disorders of his soul.

He will advise him (for instance) not to torment himself about the *cause* of his troubles, or the *instruments* of his afflictions, or be over anxious concerning the *issue* of them. For this will only create *vexation, fruitless complaints,* and a *sinful distrust,* which are all

the effects of *pride* and *self-love*, and serve only to bereave him of that peace of mind, which is necessary to carry him through his trials with the resignation of a Christian.

He will then show him, that by being brought into these circumstances, whether his afflictions be for *trial* or *punishment*, he has a special title to the favour of God, and to many great and precious promises, provided he submits to God's order and appointment. For God has declared himself to be the helper of the friendless; the comforter of the afflicted; a light to them that are in darkness, and know not what way to take. He has promised to be a father to the fatherless, and an husband to the widow; that he will undertake the cause of the oppressed, and of such as call upon him in their distress. So that no man ought to think himself destitute and miserable, who has God to fly to, and God's word for his comfort.

Upon the first *approach* of troubles, therefore, his spiritual guide will direct him to fall down before God,—to humble himself under his afflicting hand,—to acknowledge *that God's judgments are right, and that he of very faithfulness has caused him to be troubled*; beseeching God that he may make a good use of his

troubles;—to cast his whole care upon God, trusting in his wisdom to know, and his goodness to appoint, what is best for him; resolving, by the grace of God, to make that his choice which he has prayed for all his life, *that God's will may be done.*

He will also assure him, that let his mind be never so much disordered, and his soul oppressed with sorrow, God can support and comfort him; that he has a promise of the same grace which enabled St. Paul to *take pleasure in afflictions, in persecutions, in infirmities, in reproaches*; which enabled the first Christians, *to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance*;* which enabled holy Job, under the severest trials, to submit without repining to God's appointment, saying only, *the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.*

Lastly. His Pastor will tell him, that St. James is so far from looking upon the case of the afflicted as desperate, that he affirmeth, *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, (that is approved) he shall receive a crown of life which fadeth not away.*

* Heb. xi. 34.

And sure no man will think his own case hard, whatever his afflictions may be, when he is put in mind of the sufferings of Christ his Lord and Master, who had not where to lay his head;—who was set at nought by those he came to save;—who was called a dealer with the devil, a glutton, and a wine-bibber;—who was assaulted by all the powers of hell, so that his soul was sorrowful even to death; was betrayed by one disciple, and forsaken by all the rest; was falsely accused by the Jews, set at nought by Herod, unjustly condemned by Pilate, barbarously treated by the soldiers, was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and suffered death, even the death of the cross.

This was the treatment which the Son of God met with when he was on earth; and this will silence all complaints, or else we are very unreasonable indeed.

But after all, our greatest comfort is this: That this Jesus, who himself was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; who felt the weakness of human nature, and the troubles to which we are subject: This Jesus is our advocate with the Father; who for his sake *will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear*, but will enable us,

as he did St. Paul, *in whatever state we are to be therewith content.*

*Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls unto him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.**

* 1 Pet. iv. 19.

EXHORTATIONS PROPER FOR SERVANTS.

SERVANTS make a considerable part of every clergyman's charge, and will always stand in need of a particular application. They have as many duties and temptations as other Christians, and have need of as much care—to implant the fear of God in their hearts,—to encourage them to bear with patience the difficulties of their state,—to teach them the duties of their calling,—and to secure them from such sins as they are most subject to.

Servants ought not to imagine that the meanness of their condition will free them from being accountable to God for their behaviour in that state of life in which his providence has placed them. They are as capable of eternal happiness, and as liable to eternal misery, as the masters they serve; and as strict an account will be required of them. And therefore the Apostles are very particular in setting down the duties of their calling, and the sins they ought to be most careful to avoid.

For example:—That they should be diligent in their business, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, in singleness of heart, fearing God; *Knowing that of the Lord they shall receive a reward.**

They should be often put in mind to make a conscience of their master's interest, that nothing under their care be lost or wasted by their negligence. *This is to show all good fidelity.†*

To be exactly just and honest; not *purloining* as the Apostle speaks, but remembering that he was an *unjust steward*, and not to be imitated by any honest servant, who made himself friends at his master's cost.‡

To bear with patience the orders and reproofs of those to whom they are subject, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.—St. Peter saith expressly, that such submission is not only a duty, but a duty *acceptable to God.*||

They should have a strict charge given them to avoid *lying*, which is hateful to God,§ and *tale-bearing*, which is the occasion of much sin and mischief. Not to corrupt their

* Col. iii. 24.

† Titus ii. 10.

‡ Luke xvi. 1.

§ 1 Pet. ii. 20.

|| Prov. vi. 17.

own or others' hearts and memories with filthy *stories*, wicked *songs*, or *profane expressions*. Never to be tempted by the authority of a wicked master, or by the example of a wicked fellow-servant, to do any thing that is *unjust*, *extravagant*, or any way *unlawful*. To avoid *sloth* and *idleness*, which are very bad characters of a servant.

They should be often called upon to be careful to keep the Lord's day holy.

Servants have a special right and interest in that day, given them by God himself,—not to spend it in idleness and vanity, but in going to Church and hearing God's word, and begging his grace, comfort, and blessing, that whatsoever their lot is in this life, they may not fail to be happy in the next.

For this reason, they should be put in mind, that their state of life does not excuse them from praying to God daily as well as they can, that they may faithfully discharge their duty, and patiently bear the burthen laid upon them; which the meanest servant will be better content with, if he is put in mind of our blessed Lord, who, though he was the Son of the Most High, yet he took upon him the condition of a servant, to teach us humility, and that the lowest condition is acceptable to

God, where people are careful to do the duties of such a state.

Lastly. Servants should know, that labour is the punishment of sin appointed by God himself, who passed this sentence upon Adam,* “*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread;*” condemning him and his posterity to labour and toil, that they might look for rest in heaven, since there is so little true satisfaction on earth. So that such as accept of this punishment, in submission to the appointment of God, have indeed a better title to pardon and happiness than such as spend their lives in ease and pleasure.

* Gen. iii. 19.

OF DEALING WITH FORMAL CHRISTIANS.

THERE is not a more desperate estate than that of the *formal Christian*, who has the outward show of Godliness, but denies the power thereof; who performs the common duties of Christianity without any great concern to do them well;—*Believes in God*, without any sense of his presence, or thoughts of being accountable to him; and in *Jesus Christ*, without feeling the want of a Redeemer; without considering the life of Christ, which he ought to imitate, or the gospel, which is his rule to walk by;—*Who believes in the Holy Ghost*, without thinking how much he stands in need of his aids; without considering the enemies he has to deal with, the difficulties he shall meet with, the self-denial he is to undergo, or the good works he must abound in, as he hopes for heaven.

In short; he hopes for heaven with the indifference of one who scarce thinks of going thither, and believes eternal torments without being concerned to avoid them. He knows he ought to do more than he does, but

he has ſome faint hopes, that what he does may ſecure him from hell.

Now, this being the caſe of an infinite number of people, a Paſtor can hardly look abroad without meeting with one or other of theſe *formal, indifferent, thoughtleſs* Chriſtians, who live without fear of dying, and if not hindered by timely care will die unhappily.

Theſe Chriſtians therefore ſhould be often put in mind of God's diſpleaſure againſt ſuch as pretend to be his ſervants, without any concern to ſerve him faithfully;—of the folly of being indifferent when a man's ſoul lies at ſtake;—of the abſolute neceſſity of an inward converſion, as well as of an outward religion;—of the very great ſin of neglecting or abuſing the means of grace which God vouchſafes unto us.

He will ſhow him moreover, that without a lively faith it will be impoſſible to pleaſe God;—that without a ſerious repentance there is no forgiveness;—and that without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord.

In ſhort; ſuch Chriſtians ſhould have no reſt until they ſhall be forced out of a ſenſe of their danger, to aſk in good earneſt, *What ſhall it profit a man if he ſhall gain the whole*

world and lose his own soul? And that it was not for nothing that he commanded his followers—to seek the kingdom of God in the *first* place, and before all other things.

He will then show him that all outward ordinances from the beginning were appointed either to *create*, or to *promote*, or to *secure* a lively sense of God, and of the duties we owe him amongst men.

And as these ordinances are not at our peril to be neglected, so neither are they to be depended upon, unless they lead us to the love of God, and of our neighbour, and become a means of recovering in us the image of God, in which we were created, which *consists in righteousness and true holiness.*

When he has convinced them of this, he will exhort them to lose no time, but to beg of God, to increase their faith,—to plant his *fear* in their hearts,—to awaken in them an hearty concern for their souls, and to give them such a measure of hope and love of God, as may enable them to overcome the difficulties, the temptations, and the dangers of a Christian life.

And the good Pastor will not fail to add to these endeavours his own earnest prayers, that God of his great mercy would awaken the

careless world into a better sense of religion and care for their souls; that men may desire in good earnest to serve God, and be solicitous how to do it most acceptably, without abusing the means of grace, or deluding themselves with the foolish hopes of serving God and mammon, of being indifferent here, and happy hereafter.

OF DEALING WITH HABITUAL EVIL LIVERS.

TO visit people of this character, when they come to die, is so frightful and so difficult a part of a Clergyman's duty, that one would be at any pains to prevent so afflicting and so uneasy a task ; and which can only be prevented by dealing with such people very often and plainly, while they are in health.

By representing to them the danger they are in, while they live in open rebellion against God : That as sure as God is just, he will call them to a severe account for the abuse of his good creatures,—for defiling their own bodies,—for tempting others to sin,—for mispending that very time which God has given them to work out their salvation,—for the evil example they give,—for leading an idle and unprofitable life,—and for dishonouring God, his *laws*, his *name*, his *word*, and his *day*. Upon all which accounts, they are under the displeasure of Almighty God ; his judgments are hanging over their heads continually ; nor have they any hopes of mercy but by a speedy repentance.

For (as it is plain from God's word*) the sentence of eternal death is already pronounced against them, and God only knows how soon it may be executed.—*Whoremongers, drunkards, unjust, profane*, and even the *unprofitable*, shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven, but shall be cast into outer darkness, where the worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched.

By doing this faithfully, a Pastor will keep the conscience and the fears of a sinner awake; he will sin at least with uneasiness; and finding that sin is a *real slavery*, he may perhaps at last resolve to seek for ease in the ways of God's commandments.

That he may do so, we ought to set before him the happiness which he is yet capable, by God's grace, of obtaining; for the very design of the gospel (as Jesus Christ himself tells St. Paul,†) is, *to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God*, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance amongst them that are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus.

After this a Pastor must endeavour to drive him from all his holds of false hopes and vain

* Gal. v. 19.

† Acts xxvi. 18.

purposes. For instance—of repenting time enough hereafter; as if sinners could repent when they please, or as if it were enough to be sorry for one's sins, which a man may be, when it is too late to amend and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

Let him therefore see, that by deferring his repentance, he makes it still more difficult to repent, and that, when once he has filled up the measure of his sins, he must after that expect neither grace nor pardon.

Lest he should depend upon the goodness and long suffering of God, let him know that *this* ought to lead him to repentance.

That it is a great mercy that God, notwithstanding all a sinner has done to provoke him, will yet restore him to favour, and be a father to him.

Let him know, that there is certainly evil towards that man, who sins, and prospers in his sin, it being a sign of God's greatest displeasure, and that he leaves such a man to himself;—a condition the most to be dreaded.

Let him be assured, that if once the sentence of the unfruitful tree is passed, *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?* the prayers and tears of the whole world cannot save it.

And, lastly ; endeavour to convince him, that God is *just*, as well as *good*, and that he has already shown, that his mercy and goodness can be provoked, since he has condemned creatures of a much higher and better order than we are, even the very angels themselves, when they rebelled, *which he hath reserved in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day.*

After this represent to him the mercy of God, in sparing him so long, and in not cutting him off in the midst of his sins ; his readiness to forgive such as truly turn unto him ; and that there is joy in heaven over a sinner that repenteth.

And that he may not think his case desperate, (as great sinners are apt to do, when their consciences are awake) or that it is a thing impossible to overcome the evil habits he has contracted ; let him understand, that as the goodness, so the power of God is infinite ; that the same spirit which raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, can raise a sinner from the death of sin unto a life of righteousness.

This let him steadfastly believe, and use his endeavours, and such a faith will work wonders.

Now, if a sinner is once brought to a sense of his evil condition, and has thoughts of becoming a new man, he will still want his Pastor's assistance and advice, what methods to take in order to his sincere conversion.

And first, he must be told plainly, that he has a work of labour and difficulty to go through; such as will require thoughts of heart, great patience, earnest prayers, and earnest endeavours, self-denial, and perseverance: but then he must consider, *that it is for his life*, and that Jesus Christ has told us, *That strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life.*

He must then be made sensible, that as of himself he can do nothing, so by the grace of God he can do every thing that God requires of him, which he must pray for with the concern of one that is in earnest.

To his prayers, he must add his best endeavours; that is, he must avoid the occasions of sin, keep out of the way of temptations, avoid all company that may any way divert his thoughts from his holy purposes;—he must fast, and deny himself a great many things which his corrupt heart hankers after.

And if these things appear difficult unto him, let him ask himself, whether it is better

to do so now, than to dwell with everlasting burnings hereafter?

A sick man for his health will do all this: he will avoid company; he will observe rules; he will take very bitter potions; he will endure very many things to make the remainder of a short life comfortable. A sinner that considers, that his soul lies at stake, and that eternal happiness or misery will be the event, will not think any thing too much which God prescribes.

Lastly; if to these pious endeavours, a Pastor adds his own prayers for the sinner, that God would touch his heart, take from him all obstinacy and blindness; that he would awaken him, give him a lively sense of his sad condition, call him to repentance, enable him to break all his bonds, graciously forgive him, and give him all those helps that are necessary to become a good creature; a Pastor (whatever is the consequence) will have the comfort of having done a good work, and his duty.

NECESSARY INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUCH AS ARE UNDER THE CEN- SURES OF THE CHURCH.

WHAT the Church of England so passionately wishes for, (namely, that godly discipline may be restored) this Church, by God's favour, does actually enjoy. *Notorious sinners are put to open penance, and punished in this world, that their souls may be saved in the day of the Lord, and that others, admonished by their example, may be more afraid to offend.*

Now, to make this a real blessing to our Church and people, it is necessary that they should be often and plainly told the meaning and reason of Church discipline.

They should be told, for instance, that the Church is Christ's family;—that all the members of Christ's family ought to be blameless and holy, as they hope for any reward from him;—that none are admitted into his household, but such as do solemnly promise to live as becomes his servants;—that therefore such as, after this, turn disorderly livers, are first to be rebuked, and by fair means, if possible,

brought to reason; if not, to be turned out of his house, till they become sensible of their error; which if they do, and give sincere marks of their repentance, they will be re-admitted into the Church, and partake of its privileges as formerly.

Now, that all this may be orderly performed, Jesus Christ himself ordained his Apostles, and gave them power to ordain others, to be the stewards of this his family. To them he gave the keys of his house, with full power to *receive* such as they should find worthy, and to *shut out* the unworthy.

For the faithful discharge of which trust they will be accountable to him, their Lord and Master; which consideration ought to make them very careful—*To do nothing by prejudice or partiality:** *To use the power which the Lord hath given them* for edification, and not for the destruction of his people.†

Then let your people know, that our power is *purely spiritual*; and that when we force people by fines and imprisonments to submit to discipline, this is by the laws of the land, and we execute those laws, not properly as Christ's Ministers, but as subjects to the civil

* 1 Tim. v. 21.

† 2 Cor. xiii. 10.

power: for when princes became Christians, and were persuaded that they were answerable to God for the manners of their subjects, they endeavoured to ease themselves of that burthen, by putting it into the hands of Churchmen; which has had this unhappy effect, that Christians are often more afraid of worldly punishments, than of being denied the Holy Sacrament and other ordinances of the Christian religion, prescribed for their salvation.

Christians therefore should be made sensible, that as by baptism they are made members of Christ's Church and family, children of God; that is, have a right to apply to God with the freedom of children, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven; so by Church censures, they are verily cut off from these privileges, until they sincerely repent of their sins, and are restored by Christ's Ministers to the peace of the Church.

If any are so foolish as to say, (as some have done) *that they can go to another church*, ask them, as the Apostle did,* *Is Christ divided?* that is, Is he the head of a party, and not of the whole Church? Is not *our's* a member of

* 1 Cor. i. 13.

that Church? Have not Christ's Ministers *here* the same authority from their Lord, as any other Christian Bishops and Pastors, viz. the authority of *binding* and *loosing*? And if we proceed according to the rules of the gospel; and our sentence be confirmed by Christ, what will it profit them, if, for want of being reconciled by their proper Pastor, they shall be shut out of heaven?

Read therefore the commission which Jesus Christ has given us; read it to them out of his word; * *Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth* (proceeding according to the rules of the gospel) *shall be bound in heaven, &c.* and, *He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me.* † — *And whoso despiseth me; or whomsoever I send, despiseth God that sent me.* ‡

Let people know, that we take no pleasure in using our authority; that we do not desire to lord it over God's heritage. Our aim and endeavour is to oblige sinners to change their course of life, and be converted, that their souls may be saved; and that whenever they give us hopes of a sincere repentance, we receive them with open arms and joyful hearts.

* Matt. xviii. 18. † Luke x. 16. ‡ John xiii. 20.

Convince them, that it is not to expose offenders that we oblige them to do public penance, but that they may give glory to God, and declare to all the world; That since they have been so unhappy as to dishonour God by breaking his laws, and despising his authority, they are heartily sorry for it, and think it no shame to own it after any manner the Church shall order; believing that such a submission to God's Ministers will be acceptable to God himself, and a means of obtaining his pardon through their intercession.

Assure them, that in the primitive times, Christians begged with prayers and tears to be admitted to public penance, as the only way to obtain the pardon of their sins; they looked upon it as much a favour, as if a man, who had forfeited his life or estate, could have them restored upon acknowledging his crimes and promising amendment.

Lastly; let them know for certain, that if the Church should not take notice of them, but admit them to her holy offices and sacraments, while they continue impenitent, this would be no more a blessing to them than it was to Judas, of whom the devil took more sure possession, after he had received the sacrament from our Lord's own hands.

By taking pains to instruct penitents (and your people too out of the pulpit) in these particulars,

Offenders will be brought to a sense of their evil condition;—they will perform penance after an edifying manner:

You will promote the honour of God, the good of sinners, the truth of religion, and the public weal, and secure the authority of the Church.

And thus, by the instruction of the penitent, you will contribute to the glory of God, and the good of the Church.

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OF VISITING THE SICK.

IF one seriously considers how the generality of Christians go out of the world; how ill prepared for eternity; and how seldom such as recover make that good use of sickness which God designs by such visitations; one cannot but wish, that such as have the care of souls would think in good earnest, how to improve such momentous occasions to the best advantage.

And surely a good Pastor must have a great concern upon his spirits, when any of his flock are visited with sickness.

For if the sickness shall be unto death, here is a soul, in a few days, to enter upon a state of endless happiness or endless misery:—A thought which should make one's heart to tremble.

But if the sick person shall recover, and is not bettered by his sickness, here is, perhaps, the last opportunity (which God may afford that man of seeing the error of his ways) for ever lost; and where the blame will lie God himself has told us: * *He is taken away in*

* Ezek. xxxiii. 6.

his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the Watchman's hand.

Why, what could the watchman do? He could at least deliver his own soul. But he must do a great deal more: so saith the Spirit of God by Elihu: * *When a man is chastened with pain upon his bed, and his soul draweth near unto the grave: If there be with him an interpreter, that is, one able to explain the meaning and use of such visitations; If he say, I have sinned, and it profiteth me not, that is, if he be brought to true repentance, then will God be gracious unto him, and his soul shall see the light. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.*

In short, sickness, whether mortal or not, cometh not by chance, but is a warning for men to prepare for eternity. And it mightily concerns such as have the care of souls not to lose such occasions of doing the greatest good to the souls of men, always remembering, that *I was sick and ye visited me not*, † is one of those reasons for which men will be shut out of Heaven.

Now, the design of this paper is,—to pro-

* Job xxxiii.

† Matt. xxv. 36.

pose a method of answering the ends of the Church in her excellent office *for visiting the sick*. That such as are put into our hands, by the providence of God, may be dealt with as their needs require; whether it be to examine the sincerity of their faith and repentance; or to receive their confession, and administer absolution to such as earnestly desire it; or to awaken the consciences of the careless; to comfort dejected spirits; or, lastly, to exhort such as recover, to consider the mercy they have received, and to dedicate the remainder of their lives to the service of God.

And, in the first place, a good Pastor will not always stay till he is sent for. He knows that the repentance of the dead comes too late, and that the fear of death, which is to determine a man's state to all eternity, will make men willing to hear reproof, and to take advice: Such an opportunity, therefore, he will not lose if he can possibly help it.

They that omit the salutation,—*Peace be to this house, and to all that dwell in it*, or pronounce it so low as not to be heard, have not well considered the authority they have, as Ministers of Christ, to offer peace and salvation to all that are disposed to receive it.*

* Matt. x. 13.

If the short litany and prayers following be said with deliberation and devotion, there cannot better be made use of: Besides, they are the voice of the Church, which will be sure to be heard at the throne of grace.

After these follow *two exhortations*, which should never be omitted: but then they should be read with very great deliberation, that the sick person may weigh what is said, and receive instruction and comfort from it.

And now, forasmuch as a well grounded faith in God will be the sick person's best defence against the assaults of the devil,* who will be sure to tempt him, either to despair of God's mercy, or to presume upon his own righteousness, or to be impatient, and to charge God foolishly; the Church, therefore, in the next place directs us—to *examine the sick person's faith*, that is, whether he believes as a Christian man ought to do, or no: and in order to that, to ask him,—*Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, &c.*

But lest sick people, and such as are of slow understanding, should profess with their lips what they are not able to apply to their soul's comfort; it will be highly charitable and use-

* Eph. vi. 16.

ful, after repeating the Creed, to propose the use that ought to be made of it, *in short questions*, after some such way as this following :

Do you believe that it is God who ordereth all things both in heaven and on earth ?

Then you must believe that nothing can come by chance ; and that, as our Lord saith, *even a sparrow does not die without God's knowledge and his leave.*

Do you believe that this present visitation of your's is from God ?

If God is our Father, his correction must be for our good.

Do you firmly believe this ; and that this sickness is ordered by him for some special end ?

Then consider for what ends a loving father corrects his child ; either he is careless, or disobedient, or forgets his duty ; or takes such ways as would ruin himself, if he were let alone.

Is not this your case ?

To be sure, if it were left to your own ordering, you would never choose afflictions ; but God sees that it is good for you to be in trouble ; or it may be, God will try whether you will love and trust in him, as well in sickness as in health.

Will you, therefore, like a dutiful child, be thankful that your heavenly Father takes so much care of you?

Will you endeavour to bear your sickness patiently, and submit to God's will, whether it be for life or for death?

Does not this affliction convince you, that nothing deserves our love but God, since no being else can help us in the day of adversity?

Will you therefore, *in the first place*, make application to God by prayer for an happy issue out of this affliction?

JESUS, you know, signifies a *Saviour*; and we all hope that he will be a *Saviour* to us. But this he will not be, unless we obey him as our *Lord*, that is, as our *ruler*, and *law-giver*.

You must therefore consider wherein you have broke his laws, and you must repent of it, ask God's pardon, and resolve to do so no more, as you hope that he will be a *Saviour* to you.

You believe *that he was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary*.

Why then you are sure that he is the Son of God; he is able to save such as come unto God by him; and as he was born of a wo-

man, and took our nature upon him, he knows, for he has felt our weaknesses, and will pity our infirmities.

You believe *that he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.*

Are you not then hereby convinced what a sad state man was in, when God could not be reconciled to him, till his own Son had suffered what man had deserved to suffer?

And do not you see at the same time, that no true penitent need despair, since here is a sufficient price paid for our redemption?

Neither ought you to doubt that God will deny us any thing, since he spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all.

Do you therefore place all your hopes of mercy in Christ's death, and in the promises of God, for his sake, made to us?

Will you endeavour to follow the example of your Lord and Saviour, who bore with submission and patience whatever God thought fit to lay upon him?

And will you remember that he did so, though his very judge found no fault in him? But we suffer justly, for we receive the due rewards of our deeds.

And lastly; you will do well to remember the dying words of our Saviour; and when

you come to die, *commend your spirit into the hands of God.*

You believe *that Jesus Christ rose again the third day from the dead.*

Why then you are sure that his sufferings and death were well pleasing to God, who otherwise would not have raised him to life again.

And though your soul, when you die, shall go into an unknown world; yet, if you die in the favour of God, you will have the same God to take care of you that Jesus Christ had.

And lastly; you are hereby assured, that God, who raised Christ from the dead, will also quicken our mortal bodies; for so he hath declared in his word.

Since you believe *that Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God,* you must conclude, that all power in heaven and in earth is committed unto him.

And can there be greater comfort for a sinner than this; That he who died for us is ever with God, pleading the cause of his poor creatures that come unto God by him?

Though therefore, for your own sake, you cannot look for favour, yet for Jesus' sake

you may, who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Will you therefore endeavour to set your heart above, where your Saviour is?

And that you may do so more earnestly, remember your Saviour's words when he was leaving the world :—*I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also.*

You believe *that Jesus Christ shall come to judge both the quick and the dead.*

If you believe this so truly as you ought to do, you will take care to judge yourself beforehand, that you may not be condemned of the Lord, when he cometh to judge the world in righteousness.

Will you therefore examine your life, and see wherein you have offended, that you may repent and make your peace with God, remembering, that as death leaves you, judgement will find you?

However, you have this to comfort your soul, if you are sincerely penitent, that he who knows our infirmities, he who died to redeem us, is to be our judge.

And God grant that you may find mercy in that great day.

You profess to *believe in the Holy Ghost*, to whom you were dedicated in baptism, and by which you were sealed to the day of redemption.

Now, if you have grieved this Holy Spirit, and by wicked works have driven him from you, you must sadly repent of it, and earnestly pray God to restore him, without whose aid you can never be sanctified, never be happy.

And when you call yourself to an account, consider whether you have lived in obedience to those *whom the Holy Ghost hath set over you*; that is, the ministers of the gospel.

Do you propose to live and die *in the communion of this Church* in which you were baptized?

Our Lord tells you what a blessing it is to be a member of that Church, of which he is the head.

“I am (saith he) the vine, ye are the branches; as the branches cannot bear fruit unless they abide in the vine, no more can ye, unless ye abide in me.”

In short, a member of Christ's Church has a right to the forgiveness of sins,—to the favour of God,—to the merits of Christ,—to the assistance of the Holy Ghost,—and to the

ministry of the holy angels. Blessings which you can never be sufficiently thankful for.

Do you firmly believe that God, in consideration of Christ's sufferings, will forgive all such as with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him?

But then you must consider that *forgiveness of sins* is to be hoped for only in God's own way, that is, by the ministry of those to whom God has committed the word of reconciliation.

And that the promise of forgiveness of sin *should be no pretence for continuing in sin, in hopes of pardon.*

Do you believe that we shall all rise again, some to *everlasting happiness*, and some to *everlasting misery*?

If this faith be in you of a truth, it will convince you of the vanity of this world, its profits, pleasures, honours, fame, and its idols; so that you will not, as unbelievers do, look for your portion here.

Do not you see what a mercy it is when God punisheth sinners in this life, since they, whose punishment is deferred till the next, must suffer everlastingly?

And if the difficulties of repentance and an holy life affright you, consider this one thing, *Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?*

Remember the words of Christ to the penitent thief,—*This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*

Let the expectation of that happy day, and a faith and hope full of immortality, make you diligent to make your calling and election sure, and sweeten all the trouble and difficulties of doing it.

And may Almighty God strengthen and increase your faith, that you may die in this belief, and in the peace and communion of the Church. *Amen.*

THE sick Christian having thus professed his *faith in God*, the next thing necessary to be enquired into is, *the truth of his repentance.* The Church therefore orders, that now the minister shall *examine* (not *exhort* him to it only) whether he repent him truly of all his sins?

And verily the Church in *this* consulted the necessities of *sick persons*, who are not able to attend to long exhortations, and are too apt to forget what is said to them after that manner; and may be brought to know the true

state of their souls by *examining* them, that is, by short, plain, and proper questions; of which hereafter.

In the mean time a prudent Pastor will find himself obliged (here) to consider more particularly the circumstances of the person with whom he has to do, that he may examine his repentance accordingly.

For instance, Christians are not always sensible of their own ailments.

First. Some are very *ignorant*, and know not why they live, or what will become of them when they die.

Secondly. Some are *vainly confident*, and must be humbled.

Thirdly. Some are *too much dejected*, and must be comforted.

Fourthly. Some are *hardened*, and must be awakened.

Fifthly, and lastly. Such as hope to recover, will be apt to put off their repentance, and reject the counsel of God for their good.

Now, something in all these cases should be said, to dispose the sick to a sincere repentance.

I. *To such as are very ignorant.*

Such as are *ignorant* should be made sensi-

ble, that this life is a state of trial, and a passage only to another.

That God has given men reason and conscience, and has also given them laws to walk by.

That after this life we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, who will render to every man according to his deeds.*

“That such as have done good, shall go into life everlasting; and such as have done evil, into everlasting misery.” And that thus it will be, whether men lay these things to heart or not.

And the only comfort a sinner has is this, that God for Christ’s sake will accept his sincere repentance.

I require you, therefore, as you value your soul, to make your peace with God speedily. And that you may know wherein you have offended, I will set before you the law of God, to the end you may judge yourself, and call on God for mercy, as often as I shall put you in mind of any sin you have been guilty of.

II. *To such as are vainly confident.*

Such as are *confident* of their own righteous-

* Rom. ii. 6.

ness, or depend upon an outward profession of Christianity, should be put in mind of our Lord's words to the Pharisees:* *Ye are they that justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts.*

They should be told, that the publican who durst not lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, *God be merciful unto me a sinner*, returned justified before him who thought too well of himself.

And that our Lord invited such only as were weary and heavy laden to come to him, because these only are prepared to become his true disciples.

Thou sayest that thou art rich, and hast need of nothing (saith our Lord to the Church of Laodicea), *and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*†

You see how sad a thing it is to have too good an opinion of one's self.

And it is only because Christians do not consider the many duties that they have omitted, and the many sins they have been guilty of, that makes them speak peace to their souls.

* Luke xvi. 15.

† Rev. iii. 17.

In the laws of God, therefore, which I am going to set before you, you will see, as in a glass, the charge that is against you, and I require you to judge yourself, as you expect favour from God.

III. *To such as want Comfort, being dejected.*

And first; if the sick person is under agonies of mind, on account of some great sin, or wickedness long lived in, a prudent Pastor will not too hastily speak peace to him; he will rather endeavour that he may continue to sorrow after a godly sort; that is, not so much for having offended against a God who can destroy both body and soul in hell, but as having offended a gracious Father, a merciful Saviour, and an Holy Spirit.

Such a sorrow as this will not lessen a Christian's horror for sin, but will make him more humble, more fearful of offending;—acknowledging God's justice, and his own unworthiness, but yet resolving to lay hold of the promises of mercy, for Christ's sake, to penitent sinners.

But then, there being a *sorrow that worketh death*, making sinners impatient, doubting God's goodness, questioning his promises,

neglecting repentance;—such a sorrow is to be resisted, and discouraged, as a temptation of the devil, being the effect of pride, and of an unwillingness to submit to God.

But if the sick person's sorrow proceeds, as it too often does, from mistakes concerning God; the extent of Christ's sufferings; the unpardonableness of some sins, and some states; the sincerity of his own faith and repentance; he is then to be comforted with such truths as these:—

That GOD *delighteth in mercy.**

That he is *gracious and merciful, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.†*

That the devil, knowing this, uses all his arts and endeavours to tempt sinners to despair.

That therefore God himself bids us to *call upon him in time of trouble, and he will hear us.*

Nay, he calls himself *a father*, on purpose that sinners may consider how a father would deal with his own child, when he saw him truly sensible of his errors.

That Jesus Christ came into the world to

* Micah vii. 18.

† Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7.

save sinners,* even such as were lost:† That he ever liveth to make intercession for us.‡

And we have his own promise for it;—*He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out;§ and, he that believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.||*

That the gospel is a most *gracious dispensation*, requiring only such an obedience as a poor frail creature can pay.

That that *faith* is not to be questioned which *purifieth the heart;¶* which *worketh by love;** that is, makes us do what we can to please God; and which resisteth temptations, and enables us to overcome them.

That wherever amendment of life followeth such a faith as this, *there is true repentance*: And that where there is sincerity, there our obedience will be accepted, though it is not perfect as the law requires.

In short; no man will have reason to despair, if he considers, *that God doth nothing in vain*: And that if he visits a sinner; if he exhorts him by his ministers; if he touches his heart; if he gives him time to consider his ways, when he might have taken him away without warning; why, it is because

* 1 Tim. i. 15.

† Matt. xviii. 11.

‡ Heb. vii. 25.

§ John vi. 37. || Rom. iii. 35. ¶ Acts xv. 9.

** Gal. v. 6.

he designs to be gracious, if the sinner is not wanting to himself.

I will therefore set before you the law of God, not to *affright* you, but that you may *know, and confess, and forsake your sin, and find mercy, as God hath promised.**

IV. *To such as are hardened in Wickedness, and must be awakened.*

This is indeed a melancholy case; but a good Pastor, while God continues life, will continue his endeavours, for he does not know but *this* is God's time.

He will therefore try what the *sword of the spirit* will do, that *word* which the same *spirit* tells us, is profitable for correction as well as for instruction†.

He will therefore put him in mind, that if he dies in his sins unrepented of, he will go out of the world a professed enemy to that *God who can destroy both body and soul in hell*; who will, as the Holy Scriptures assure us, take vengeance on all them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who shall be punished with everlasting destruction.‡

* Prov. xxv. 13. † 2 Tim. iii. 16. ‡ 2 Thess. i. 8, 9.

He will let him know, that this may be his condition in a few days; for our Lord assures us, That as soon as ever the wicked man died, he was carried to hell.*

That this is the last time, perhaps, that ever God will afford you to beg his pardon; and you will be desperately mad to neglect it.

It is true, God is not willing that any should perish; and he can conquer the stubbornest heart, but he will not do it by force.

He has shown his mercy in afflicting your body, and in taking from you the power to do evil.

What is this for, but that you may open your eyes, and see your danger, and ask his pardon, and beg his assistance, and be delivered from the severity of his wrath, which you must certainly feel without a speedy repentance?

It may be, you do not know *the charge that is against you*; I will, therefore, repeat to you the substance of those laws which you have broken, and by which you must be judged.

If you have any concern for your soul, if

* Luke vi. 10.

you have any fear of God in your heart, you will hear, and judge, and condemn yourself, that you may escape in the dreadful judgment of the last day.

V. To such as, in hopes of Recovery, put off their Repentance.

Such should be made sensible,—That sickness is not only the *punishment*, but the *remedy of sin*.*

That it is the chiefest of those ways, by which God shows men their sin,—by which he discovers to them the vanity of the world that bewitches them,—by which he takes down the pride of the heart, and the stubbornness of the will, which has hindered their conversion.

In short; it is God's time: so that not to repent in sickness is in effect to resolve never to repent.

For what shall incline a man to repent when he recovers, which does not move him now?

His hopes of heaven, and his fears of hell, will not be greater then than now.

And it would be the highest presumption

* Micah vi. 9.

to expect that God will give that man an extraordinary degree of grace, who despises the most usual means of conversion.

A Pastor, therefore, will set before him the law of God, which he has transgressed, that he may see the need he has of repenting, and that he may not provoke God to cut him off before his time, because there is no hope of amendment.

Examination of the Sick Person's Repentance.

DEARLY beloved, you are, it may be, in a very short time, to appear before God.

I must therefore put you in mind, that your salvation depends upon the truth of your repentance.

Now, forasmuch as you became a sinner, by breaking the laws of God, you have no way of being restored to God's favour, but by seeing the number and the greatness of your sins, that you may hate them heartily, lament them sorely, and cry mightily to God for *pardon*.

I will therefore set before you the laws of

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God, by which God will judge you; and I will ask you such questions as may be proper to call your sins to your remembrance; and you will do well, wherever you shall have reason, to say with the publican,—*God be merciful unto me*, for I have offended in *this or that thing*.

And be not too tender of yourself; but remember, that the more severe you are in accusing and condemning yourself, the more favour you may expect from God.

Your duty to God, you know, is, to fear him, to love him, to trust in him, to honour, and to obey him.

Consider, therefore, seriously;—Have you not lived as if there were no God to call you to an account?

Has the knowledge of God's almighty power, and his severe justice, made you fearful of offending him?

Are you convinced that you have not loved God so much as his goodness and care of you deserved?

Has the love of God made you desirous to please him?

Have you so put your trust in God as to be contented with what he has appointed, with-

out murmuring, and without questioning the wisdom of his choices?

Have you not been unthankful for God's mercies?

Have you never, as you know of, taken any else oath?

Have you never been accustomed to swear, to curse, or to take God's name in vain?

Have you not very often spent the Lord's day idly?

Have you not been careless and irreverent in God's house?

Have you been careful to pray to God daily, for his pardon, his grace, and his protection?

Have you constantly received the Lord's Supper when you have had an opportunity?

Have you never gone profanely to the Sacrament without examining yourself, and without purposing to lead a new life?

Have you not despised God's word, his ministers, or his house?

Your duty to your neighbour, is, to love him as yourself.

Have you so loved all men, as to wish and pray sincerely for their welfare?

Have you not hated your enemies?

Have you paid due reverence in heart, in

word, in behaviour, to your parents, and to all such as were over you in place and authority?

Have you not been subject to sinful, unadvised anger?

Have you never done any thing to shorten the life of your neighbour?

Have you not lived in malice or envy, or wished any man's death?

Have you not been accustomed to sow strife and dissention amongst your neighbours?

Have you not fallen into the sins of drunkenness, gluttony, tippling, or an idle life?

Have you kept yourself free from the sins of whoredom, impurity, or uncleanness?

Have you none of the sins of injustice, extortion, or of any way wronging your neighbour, to answer for?

Have you not been unfaithful in any matters of trust committed to you?

Have you not been subject to the evil habits of lying, slandering, or tale-bearing?

Have you never given false evidence, out-faced the truth, or countenanced an evil cause?

Have you not been pleased with evil reports; and have you not been too forward to propagate them?

Have you not been vexatious to your neighbour, and grieved him without cause?

Have you not been dissatisfied with the condition which God allotted you?

Have you not coveted your neighbour's goods, envied his prosperity, or been pleased with his misfortunes?

Have you done to others as you wish they should have done to you?

Can you call to mind any injury or injustice, for which you ought to ask pardon, or make restitution?

And remember you are told the truth, that the unrighteous and unjust shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Is there any body that has grievously wronged you, to whom you ought to be reconciled?

Remember, that if you forgive not, you will not be forgiven; and that he will receive judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy.

Are you therefore in charity with all the world?

Have you been kind to the poor according to your ability?

And remember that the moment Zaccheus resolved to do right to every body, and to be

kind to the poor, our Lord tells him, that *salvation was then come to his house.*

You would do well therefore, as a proof of your thankfulness to God, to be liberal to the poor, according to your ability?

And if you have not already settled your worldly concerns, and declared what you owe, and what is owing to you; it is fit you do so now; for the discharging a good conscience, and for preventing mischief after your death.

And be very careful that in making your will, you do no wrong; discover no resentment, that the last act of your life may be free from sin.

And now I will leave you for a while to God, and to your own conscience; beseeching him to discover to you, the charge that is against you; that you may know, and confess, and bewail, and abhor, the errors of your life past; that your sins may be done away by his mercy, and your pardon sealed in heaven, before you go hence and be no more seen.

CONCERNING CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION.

CONCERNING confession, Archbishop Usher has these words:—"No kind of confession, either public or private, is disallowed by our Church, that is any way requisite for the due execution of the ancient power of the keys, which Christ bestowed on the Church.*

Concerning absolution, Bishop Andrews hath these words:—"It is not said by Christ, *Whose sins ye wish and pray for, or declare to be remitted*; but, *Whose sins ye remit*:—To which he addeth a promise, that he will make it good, and that his power shall accompany the power he has given them, and the lawful execution of it in his Church for ever."

And indeed the very same persons baptize for the remission of sins; and administer the Lord's Supper as a seal of the forgiveness of sins to all worthy communicants.

It is not water that can wash away sin, nor bread and wine; but these rightly adminis-

* Answer to the Jesuit, p. 84.

tered, by persons truly authorized, and to persons duly qualified by faith and repentance. And thus absolution benefiteth, by virtue of the power which Jesus Christ has given his ministers.*

In short; our Lord having purchased the forgiveness of sins for all mankind, he hath committed the ministry of reconciliation to us; that having brought men to repentance, we may in Christ's name, and in the person of Christ,† pronounce their pardon.

And this will be the true way to magnify the power of the keys, which is so little understood, or so much despised; namely, to bring as many as possibly we can to repentance, that we may have more frequent occasions of sealing a penitent's pardon by our ministry.

And now, if the sick person has been so dealt with as to be truly sensible of his condition, he should then be instructed in the nature and benefit of confession (at least of such sins as do trouble his conscience) and of absolution.

For instance,—he should be told, that as under the law of Moses, God made his priests

* John xx. 23.

† 2 Cor. ii. 10.

the judges of leprosy,* and gave them rules, by which they were to determine who were clean, and fit to enter into the congregation, (which was a type of heaven) and who were not clean.

Even so, under the Gospel, he has given his Priests authority to judge sin, which is the leprosy of the soul. He has given them rules to judge by, with authority to pronounce their pardon, if they find them qualified; for this is their commission from Christ's own mouth, *Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them.*

But then we dare not take upon us to exercise this authority, until sinners give such signs of a sincere faith and true repentance, as may persuade one charitably to believe, that amendment of life will follow, if God shall think fit to grant them longer time.

At the same time, therefore, that we are bound to encourage penitents earnestly to desire absolution, and to exhort them to receive the Lord's Supper, as a pledge to assure them of pardon; we must sincerely admonish them not to hope for any benefit either from the one or the other, but upon condition of their sincere repentance.

* Lev. xiii.

It will be proper, therefore, before absolution, and for more satisfaction, to ask the sick person some such questions as these :

Have you considered the sins which you have been most subject to ?

Are you convinced that it is an evil thing and bitter to forsake the Lord ?

Are you resolved to avoid all temptations, and occasions of the sins you have now repented of ?

Do you verily believe that you shall not fall into any of these sins again ?

If you should do so, will you immediately beg God's pardon, and be more watchful over yourself ?

Will you strive with all your might to overcome the corruptions of your nature, by prayers, by fasting, and by self-denial ?

Do you purpose, if God shall prolong your days, to bring forth fruits meet for repentance ?

Are you in perfect charity with all the world ?

Every Christian, whose life has been, in the main, unblameable, and whose repentance has thus been particularly examined, and who has given a satisfactory answer to these questions, ought not to leave the world without the benefit of absolution, which he should be ear-

nestly pressed to desire, and exhorted to dispose himself to receive, as the Church has appointed.



CONCERNING HABITUAL SINNERS.

IF a person of this character be visited with sickness, a prudent Pastor will not presently apply comfort, or give him assurances of pardon; he will rather strive to increase his sorrow to such a height, as, if God should spare him, might produce a repentance not to be repented of.

It was thus (as Dr. Hammond observes) that God himself dealt with such kind of sinners.*

The children of Israel did evil again, that is, they went on in their wickedness, upon which God sorely distresses them. They cried unto God, but he answers them, *I will deliver you no more.* However, this did not make them utterly to despair; for they knew that his mercy had no bounds; they therefore

* Judges x. 6.

still went on to apply to him for pardon and help, and resolved to do what was *at present* in their power towards a reformation;—at last God was prevailed on to accept and deliver them.

And thus should we deal with habitual sinners:—we should not break the bruised reed;—we should indeed give them assurances of pardon, upon their sincere repentance: but forasmuch as it is very hard, even for themselves to know, whether their sorrow and resolutions are such as would bring forth fruit answerable to amendment of life: all that a confessor can do is, to exhort such persons to do all that is in their present power;—to take shame to themselves;—to give glory to God in a free confession of their crimes, (which St. James saith is of great use towards obtaining their pardon) to pray without ceasing;—to warn others to beware of falling into the same sad condition;—and to consider, that a wicked life, to which God has threatened eternal fire, cannot be supposed to be forgiven by an easy repentance.

And though the Church has no rules in this case to go by, but such as are very afflicting, yet God is not tied to rules; he sees what is in man, and may finally absolve one whom his

ministers dare not, until, after a long probation, they have reason, in the judgment of charity, to believe that his repentance is sincere.

And this a prudent Pastor will be careful to observe, both to prevent the scandal of an hasty absolution, and because he knows such ministrations do no good to those that receive them.

TO SUCH AS HAVE RECOVERED FROM SICKNESS.

AND, in the first place, a Pastor should be very careful to put his people in mind, that the first fruits of health should always be offered to God.

And for as much as there is nothing more common, nor more to be lamented, than for people in sickness to make very solemn promises of better obedience, and upon their recovery to forget all, and to return to their former careless life;—a Pastor will warn them betimes how God hates such backslidings, how unthankful, how provoking it is, and the readiest way to draw down a worse evil, or to be given over to a reprobate mind.

And, indeed, a man that has received the sentence of death in himself,—that has seen the hazard of a death-bed repentance,—that has felt the horror of sin, when it is most frightful:—for such a person to grow secure, is an amazing instance of the corruption of our nature; and therefore it will require a Pastor's greatest care to prevent a relapse. Especially to guard his people against general

purposes of amendment, which lull the mind asleep; and before people are aware, they are just where they were before sickness seized them.

A love for sin returns;—God is provoked, and grace withdrawn;—and every relapse makes a Christian's case more desperate.

A Christian, therefore, who is in good earnest, must be put upon rectifying the errors of his life, immediately, as he hopes for mercy, whenever God visits him again.

If an idle life has been his fault, he must take to business;—if intemperance, he must at his peril be sober;—if he has been given to appetite, to ease, and to luxury, he must deny himself, and labour to mortify these corrupt affections;—if he has observed no method of living, he must for the future fix proper times for prayer, for fasting, for retirement, and for calling himself to an account. In short, he must avoid, as much as possible, all occasions and temptations to sin;—if he is overtaken in a fault, he must immediately repent of it, and be more careful; he must *not* be discouraged with the difficulties he will meet with, for the power of God is sufficient to make a virtuous life *possible, easy, and*

pleasant, to the weakest Christian that depends upon his grace.

Let him therefore be exhorted to persevere in his good resolutions;—to depend upon God's power and promises, to assist him to pray daily for light to discover, and for strength to overcome the corruptions of his nature;—and, lastly, to be always afraid of backsliding: and then sickness and death, whenever they come, will be a blessing.

And as a faithful discharge of this duty will give a curate of souls the greatest comfort at the hour of death, so there is nothing doth more preserve the authority which a faithful Pastor ought to have over his flock.

FINIS.

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